SERMONS

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the moſt Reverend

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LATE

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MDCCXLVIII.

SERMON CXI.

The danger of all known ſin, both from the light of nature and revelation.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

ROM. i. 18, 19.

For the wrath of GOD *is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs; becauſe that which may be known of* GOD *is manifeſted in them, for* GOD *hath ſhewed it unto them.*

IN the beginning of this chapter, the apoſtle declares that he was particularly deſigned and appointed by GOD to preach the goſpel to the world, and that he was not aſhamed of his miniſtry, notwithſtanding all the reproach and perſecution it was attended withal, and notwithſtanding the ſlight and undervaluing opinion, which the world had of the doctrine which he preached, it being *to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs*; for though this might reflect ſome diſparagement upon it in the eſteem of ſenſual and carnal men, yet to thoſe who weighed things impartially, and conſidered the excellent end and deſign of the Chriſtian doctrine, and the force and efficacy of it to that end, it will appear to be an inſtrument admirably fitted by the wiſdom of GOD, for the reformation and ſalvation of mankind.

And therefore he tells us, ver. 16. that how much ſoever it was deſpiſed by that ignorant and inconſiderate age, *he was not aſhamed of the goſpel of* CHRIST; *becauſe*

it is the power of GOD *unto ſalvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Greek*; that is, the doctrine of the goſpel ſincerely believed and embraced, is a moſt proper and powerful means, deſigned by GOD for the ſalvation of mankind; not only of the Jews, but alſo of the Gentiles.

The revelations which GOD had formerly made, were chiefly reſtrained to the Jewiſh nation; but this great and laſt revelation of the goſpel, was equally calculated for the benefit and advantage of all mankind. The goſpel indeed was firſt preached to the Jews, and from thence publiſhed to the whole world; and as this doctrine was deſigned for the general benefit of mankind, ſo it was very likely to be effectual to that end, being an inſtrument equally fitted for the ſalvation of the whole world, Gentiles as well as Jews; *it is the power of* GOD *to ſalvation to every one that believes, to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Greek.*

And to ſhew the efficacy of it, he inſtanceth in two things, which render it ſo powerful and effectual a means for the ſalvation of mankind.

Firſt, Becauſe therein the grace and mercy of GOD in the juſtification of a ſinner, and declaring him righteous, is ſo clearly revealed, ver. 17. *For therein is the righteouſneſs of* GOD *revealed, from faith to faith, as it is written, the juſt ſhall live by faith.* This is very obſcurely expreſt, but the meaning of this text will be very much cleared, by comparing it with another in the third chapter of this epiſtle, ver. 20, 21, 22, &c. where the apoſtle ſpeaks more fully and expreſsly of the way of our juſtification by the faith of JESUS CHRIST, that is, by the belief of the goſpel. He aſſerts at the 20th verſe, that *by the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in the ſight of* GOD. To this way of juſtification *by the deeds of the law*, he oppoſeth *the righteouſneſs of* GOD *by the faith of* JESUS CHRIST, *to all, and upon all them that believe*, which is the goſpel way of juſtification, ver. 21, 22. *But now the righteouſneſs of* GOD *without the law is manifeſted, being witneſſed by the law and the*

prophets.

prophets, even the righteouſneſs of GOD, *which is by the faith of* JESUS CHRIST, *unto all, and upon all them that believe. The righteouſneſs of* GOD *without the law is manifeſted:* that is, the way which GOD hath taken to juſtify ſinners, and declare them righteous *without the deeds of the law*, that is, without obſerving the law of Moſes, *is manifeſted*, that is, is clearly revealed in the goſpel (which is the ſame with what the apoſtle had ſaid before, that *the righteouſneſs of* GOD *is revealed in the goſpel*) *being witneſſed by the law and the prophets*; that is, the righteouſneſs of GOD, or the juſtification of ſinners by JESUS CHRIST, is clearly revealed in the goſpel, being alſo in a more obſcure manner atteſted or foretold in the Old Teſtament, which he calls *the law and the prophets*; and this fully explains that difficult phraſe of *the righteouſneſs of* GOD *being revealed by the goſpel from faith to faith*; that is, by a gradual revelation, being more obſcurely foretold in the Old Teſtament, and clearly diſcovered in the New; ſo that theſe two paſſages are equivalent; *in the goſpel, the righteouſneſs of* GOD *is revealed from faith to faith*; and *the righteouſneſs of* GOD *without the works of the law is manifeſted, being witneſſed by the law and the prophets.* There is the firſt and more imperfect revelation of it, but the clear revelation of it is in the goſpel; this the apoſtle calls *a revelation from faith to faith*, that is, from a more imperfect and obſcure, to a more expreſs and clear diſcovery and belief of it. And then the citation which follows is very pertinent, *as it is written, The juſt ſhall live by faith*; for this citation out of the Old Teſtament plainly ſhews, that the way of juſtification by faith was there mentioned; or as our apoſtle expreſſeth it, *was witneſſed by the law and the prophets*; and conſequently that this was a gradual diſcovery, which he calls *a revelation from faith to faith. The juſt ſhall live by faith*, that is, good men ſhall be ſaved by their faith, ſhall be juſtified and eſteemed righteous in the ſight of GOD, and finally ſaved by their faith. And ſo the apoſtle in the fifth chapter of this epiſtle, ver. 18, calls our juſtification by the faith of

the goſpel, *the juſtification of life,* in oppoſition to *condemnation* and *death,* which very well explains that ſaying of the prophet, *the juſt ſhall live by faith.* I have been the longer upon this, that I might give ſome light to a very difficult and obſcure text.

Secondly, The other inſtance whereby the apoſtle proves the goſpel to be ſo powerful a means for the recovery and ſalvation of men is, that therein alſo the ſeverity of GOD againſt impenitent ſinners, as well as his grace and mercy in the juſtification of the penitent, is clearly revealed, ver. 18. *For the wrath of* GOD *is revealed from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs; becauſe that which may be known of* GOD *is manifeſted in them, for* GOD *hath ſhewn it unto them.* The firſt, viz. the grace of GOD in our juſtification and the remiſſion of ſins paſt, is a moſt proper and powerful argument to encourage us to obedience for the future; nothing being more likely to reclaim men to their duty, than the aſſurance of indemnity for paſt crimes; and the other is one of the moſt effectual conſiderations in the world to deter men from ſin, that *the wrath of* GOD *is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, &c.*

From which words I ſhall obſerve theſe ſix things.

Firſt, The infinite danger that a wicked and ſinful courſe doth plainly expoſe men to. *The wrath of* GOD is here ſaid to be *revealed againſt the impiety and unrighteouſneſs of men.*

Secondly, The clear and undoubted revelation which the goſpel hath made of this danger. *The wrath of* GOD againſt the ſins of men, is ſaid to be *revealed from heaven.*

Thirdly, That every wicked and vicious practice doth expoſe men to this great danger. *The wrath of* GOD *is* ſaid to be *reavealed againſt all ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs of men.*

Fourthly, That it is a very great aggravation of ſin, for men to offend againſt the light of their own minds. The apoſtle here aggravates the impiety and wickedneſs of the heathen world, that they did not live up to the knowledge

knowledge which they had of GOD, but contradicted it in their lives, which he calls *holding the truth in unrighteousness*.

Fifthly, The natural knowledge which men have of GOD, if they live wickedly, is a clear evidence of their *holding the truth in unrighteousness*. The apostle therefore chargeth them with *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, because *that which may be known of* GOD, *is manifested in them*, GOD *having shewed it to them*.

Sixthly, and lastly, That the clear revelation of the wrath of GOD in the gospel, against the impiety and wickedness of men, renders it a very powerful and likely means for the recovery and salvation of men. For the apostle proves *the gospel of* CHRIST to be *the power of* GOD *to salvation*, because *therein the wrath of* GOD *is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness*; that is, against all impenitent sinners.

I shall at the present, by GOD's assistance, speak to the three first of these particulars.

First, The infinite danger that a wicked and sinful course doth plainly expose men to. If there be a GOD that made the world, and governs it, and takes care of mankind, and hath given them laws and rules to live by, he cannot but be greatly displeased at the violation and transgression of them; and certainly the displeasure of GOD is the most dreadful thing in the world, and the effects of it the most insupportable. The greatest fear is from the greatest danger, and the greatest danger is from the greatest power offended and enraged; and this is a consideration exceeding full of terror, that by a sinful course we expose ourselves to the utmost displeasure of the great and terrible GOD; for *who knows the power of his wrath?* and *who may stand before him when once he is angry? According to thy fear, so is thy wrath* (saith the Psalmist). There is no passion in the mind of man that is more boundless and infinite than our fear; it is apt to make wild and frightful representations of evils, and to imagine them many times greater than really they are; but in this case our imagination must

fall

fall short of the truth and terror of the thing; for the wrath of GOD doth far exceed the utmost jealousy and suspicion of the most fearful and guilty conscience; and the greatest sinner under his greatest anguish and despair, cannot apprehend or fear it more than there is reason for; *according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*

If it were only the wrath and displeasure of men that the sinner were exposed to, there might be reason enough for fear, because they have many times power enough to crush an offender, and cruelty enough to fret every vein of his body, and to torment him in every part: but the wrath and vengeance of men bears no comparison with the wrath of GOD. Their passions are many times strong and blustering; but their arm is but short, and their power small, *they have not an arm like* GOD, *nor can they thunder with a voice like him.* They may design considerable harm and mischief to us; but it is not always in the power of their hand to wreak their malice upon us, and to execute all the mischief which their inraged minds may prompt them to; the very utmost they can design, is to torment our bodies, and to take away our lives, and when they have designed this, they may *die* first, and *return to their dust, and then their thoughts perish with them*, and all their malicious designs are at an end; they are always under the power and government of a superior Being, and can go no farther than he gives them leave. However, if they do their worst, and shoot all their arrows at us, we cannot stand at the mark long, their wrath will soon make an end of us, and set us free from all their cruelty and oppression; *they can but kill the body, and after that they have no more that they can do*; their most refined malice cannot reach our spirits, no weapon that can be formed by the utmost art of man can pierce and wound our souls; they can drive us out of this world, but they cannot pursue us into the other; so that at the worst the grave will be a sanctuary to us, and death a safe retreat from all their rage and fury.

But the wrath of GOD is not confined by any of these limits. *Once hath* GOD *spoken* (saith David by

an elegant Hebrew phraſe to expreſs the certainty of the thing) *once hath* God *ſpoken, and twice I have heard this, that power belongs to* God, Pſal. lxii. 11. *He hath a mighty arm*, and when he pleaſeth to ſtretch it out, none may ſtay it, nor *ſay unto him, what doſt thou*; he hath power enough to make good all his threatnings, whatever he ſays he is able to effect, and whatever he *purpoſeth* he can *bring to paſs*; for *his council ſhall ſtand, and he will accompliſh all his pleaſure*; he need but ſpeak the word, and it is done; for we can neither reſiſt his power, nor fly from it; if we fly to the utmoſt parts of the earth, his hand can reach us, for *in his hand are all the corners of the earth*; if we take refuge in the grave (and we cannot do that without his leave) thither his wrath can follow us; and there it will overtake us; for his power is not confined to this world, nor limited to our bodies; *after he hath killed, he can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell.*

And this is that *wrath of* God which is *revealed from heaven*, and which the apoſtle chiefly intends, viz. the miſery and puniſhment of another world, this God hath threatned ſinners withal; to expreſs which to us, as fully as words can do, he heaps up in the next chapter ſo many weighty and terrible words, *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil*; in oppoſition to that great and glorious reward of *immortality and eternal life*, which is promiſed to *a patient continuance in well-doing.*

So that *the wrath of God* which is here denounced *againſt the impiety and unrighteouſneſs of men*, comprehends all the evils and miſeries of this and the other world, which every ſinner is in danger of whilſt he continues impenitent; for as according to the tenor of the goſpel, *Godlineſs hath the promiſes of this life, and of that which is to come*; ſo impenitency in ſin expoſeth men to the evils of both worlds, to the judgments of *the life that now is*, and to the endleſs and intolerable torments of *that which is to come.* And what can be more dreadful than the diſpleaſure of an almighty and eternal Being? who can puniſh to the utmoſt, and *who lives for ever*, to

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execute his wrath and vengeance upon sinners; so that well might the apostle say, *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living* GOD.

Consider this all ye that forget GOD, that neglect him, and live in continual disobedience to his holy and righteous laws; much more those who despise and affront him, and live in a perpetual defiance of him. *Will ye provoke the* LORD *to jealousy? are ye stronger than he?* Think of it seriously, and forget him if you can, despise him if you dare; consider this, lest he take you into consideration, and rouze like a lion out of sleep, and *tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* This is the first observation, the infinite danger that a wicked and sinful course doth expose men to, *the wrath of* GOD, which doth not only signify more than all the evils that we know, but than all those which the wildest fears and suspicions of our minds can imagine.

Secondly, The next thing observable, is the clear and undoubted revelation which the gospel hath made of this danger, *the wrath of* GOD *is revealed*, &c. By which the apostle intimates to us, that this was but obscurely known to the world before, at least in comparison of that clear discovery which the gospel hath now made of it; so that I may allude to that expression in Job, which he applies to death and the grave, that *hell is naked before us, and destruction hath no covering.*

Not but that mankind had always apprehensions and jealousies of the danger of a wicked life, and sinners were always afraid of the vengeance of GOD pursuing their evil deeds, not only in this life, but after it too; and though they had turned the punishments of another world into ridiculous fables, yet the wiser sort of mankind could not get it out of their minds, that there was something real under them; and that Ixion's wheel, which by a perpetual motion carried him about; and Sisyphus's stone, which he was perpetually rolling up the hill, and when he had got it near the top tumbled down, and still created him a new labour; and Tantalus's continual hunger and thirst, aggravated by a perpetual nearness of enjoyment, and a perpetual disappointment;

ment; and Prometheus his being chained to a rock, with an eagle or vulture perpetually preying upon his liver, which grew as fast as it was gnawed; I say even the wiser among the Heathens looked upon these as fantastical representations of something that was real, viz. the grievous and endless punishment of sinners, the not to be endured, and yet perpetually renewed torments of another world; for in the midst of all the ignorance and degeneracy of the heathen world, men's consciences did accuse them when they did amiss, and they had secret fears and misgivings of some mighty danger hanging over them from the displeasure of a superior Being, and the apprehension of some great mischiefs likely to follow their wicked actions, which some time or other would overtake them; which because they did not always in this world, they dreaded them in the next. And this was the foundation of all those superstitions, whereby the ancient Pagans endeavoured so carefully to appease their offended deities, and to avert the calamities which they feared they would send down upon them. But all this while they had no certain assurance by any clear and express revelation from GOD to that purpose, but only the jealousies and suspicions of their own minds, naturally consequent upon those notions which men generally had of GOD, but so obscured and depraved by the lusts and vices of men, and by the gross and false conceptions which they had of GOD, that they only served to make them superstitious, but were not clear and strong enough to make them wisely and seriously religious. And to speak the truth, the more knowing and inquisitive part of the heathen world had brought all these things into great doubt and uncertainty, by the nicety and subtilty of disputes about them; so that it was no great wonder, that these principles had no greater effect upon the lives of men, when their apprehensions of them were so dark, and doubtful.

But the gospel hath made a most clear and certain revelation of these things to mankind. It was written before upon men's hearts as the great sanction of the law of nature, but the impressions of this were in a great

measure

meaſure blurred and worn out, ſo that it had no great power and efficacy upon the minds and manners of men; but now it is clearly diſcovered to us, *the wrath of* God *is revealed from heaven*, which expreſſion may well imply in it theſe three things.

Firſt, The clearneſs of the diſcovery; *the wrath of* God is ſaid to be *revealed*.

Secondly, The extraordinary manner of it; it is ſaid to be *revealed from heaven*.

Thirdly, The certainty of it; not being the reſult of ſubtle and doubtful reaſonings, but having a divine teſtimony and confirmation given to it, which is the proper meaning of *being revealed from heaven*.

Firſt, It imports the clearneſs of the diſcovery. The puniſhment of ſinners in another world is not ſo obſcure a matter as it was before; it is now expreſsly declared in the goſpel, together with the particular circumſtances of it, namely, that there is another life after this, wherein men ſhall receive the juſt recompenſe of reward for all the actions done by them in this life; that there is a particular time appointed, wherein God will call all the world to a ſolemn account, and thoſe who are in their graves ſhall by a powerful voice be raiſed to life, and thoſe who ſhall then be found alive ſhall be ſuddenly changed; *when our* Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal and only-begotten ſon of God, who once came in great humility to ſave us, ſhall come again *in power and great glory*, attended with *his mighty angels*, and *all nations ſhall be gathered before him*, and all mankind ſhall be ſeparated into two companies, *the righteous* and *the wicked*, who, after a full hearing, and fair trial ſhall be ſentenced according to their actions, the one to *eternal life and happineſs*, the other to *everlaſting miſery and torment*.

So that the goſpel hath not only declared the thing to us, that there ſhall be a future judgment; but for our farther aſſurance and ſatisfaction in this matter, and that theſe things might make a deep impreſſion, and ſtrike a great awe upon our minds, God hath been pleaſed to reveal it to us with a great many particular circum-

circumſtances, ſuch as are very worthy of GOD, and apt to fill the minds of men with dread and aſtoniſhment, as often as they think of them.

For the circumſtances of this judgment revealed to us in the goſpel, are very ſolemn and awful, not ſuch as the wild fancies and imaginations of men would have been apt to have dreſſed it up withal, ſuch as are the fictions of the heathen poets, and the extravagancies of Mahomet; which though they be terrible enough, yet they are withal ridiculous; but ſuch as are every way becoming the majeſty of the great GOD, and the ſolemnity of the great day, and ſuch as do not in the leaſt favour of the vanity and lightneſs of human imagination.

For what more fair and equal, than that men ſhould be tried by a man like themſelves, one of the ſame rank and condition, that had experience of the infirmities and temptations of human nature? So our LORD tells us, that *the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, becauſe he is the Son of man*, and therefore cannot be excepted againſt, as not being a fit and equal judge. And this St. Paul offers as a clear proof of the equitable proceedings of that day; GOD (ſays he) *hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained.*

And then what more congruous than that the Son of GOD, who had taken ſo much pains for the ſalvation of men, and came into the world for that purpoſe, and had uſed all imaginable means for the reformation of mankind; I ſay, what more congruous, than that this very perſon ſhould be honoured by GOD to ſit in judgment upon the world, and to condemn thoſe, who after all the means that had been tried for their recovery, would not repent and be ſaved. And what more proper, than that men, who are to be judged for *things done in the body*, ſhould be judged *in the body*, and conſequently that the reſurrection of the dead ſhould precede the general judgment?

And what more magnificent and ſuitable to this glorious ſolemnity, than the awful circumſtances which

the scripture mentions of the appearance of this great judge; that he shall *descend from heaven* in great majesty and glory, attended with *his mighty angels*, and that *every eye shall see him*; that upon his appearance, the frame of nature shall be in an agony, and the whole world in flame and confusion; that those great and glorious bodies of light shall be obscured, and by degrees extinguished; *the sun shall be darkned, and the moon turned into blood, and all the powers of heaven shaken*; yea, *the heavens themselves shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements dissolve with fervent heat; the earth also, and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up.* I appeal to any man, whether this be not a representation of things very proper and suitable to that great day wherein he who made the world shall come to judge it; and whether the wit of man ever devised any thing so awful, and so agreeable to the majesty of GOD, and the solemn judgment of the whole world? The description which Virgil makes of the judgment of another world, of the Elysian Fields, and the infernal regions, how infinitely do they fall short of the majesty of the holy scripture, and the description there made of heaven and hell, and of *the great and terrible day of the* LORD! so that in comparison they are childish and trifling; and yet perhaps he had the most regular and most governed imagination of any man that ever lived, and observed the greatest decorum in his characters and descriptions. But who can declare *the great things of* GOD, but *he to whom* GOD *shall reveal them!*

Secondly, this expression of *the wrath of* GOD *being revealed from heaven*, doth not only imply the clear discovery of the thing, but likewise something extraordinary in the manner of the discovery. It is not only a natural impression upon the minds of men, that GOD, will severely punish sinners; but he hath taken care that mankind should be instructed in this matter in a very particular and extraordinary manner. He hath not left it to the reason of men to collect it from the consideration of his attributes and perfections, his holiness and justice, and from the consideration of the promiscous ad-

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miniſtration of his providence towards good and bad men in this world, but he hath been pleaſed to ſend an extraordinary perſon from heaven, on purpoſe to declare this thing plainly to the world, *the wrath of* GOD *is revealed from heaven*; that is, GOD ſent *his own Son from heaven*, on purpoſe to declare his wrath againſt all obſtinate and impenitent ſinners, that he might effectually awaken the drouzy world to repentance; he hath ſent an extraordinary ambaſſador into the world, to give warning to all thoſe who continue in their ſins, of the judgment of the great day, and to ſummon them before his dreadful tribunal. So the apoſtle tells the Athenians, Acts xvii. 30, 31. *Now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent; becauſe he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.*

Thirdly, This expreſſion implies likewiſe the certainty of this diſcovery. If the wrath of GOD had only been declared in the diſcourſes of wiſe men, tho' grounded upon very probable reaſon, yet it might have been brought into doubt by the contrary reaſonings of ſubtle and diſputing men: but to put the matter out of all queſtion, we have divine teſtimony for it, and GOD hath confirmed it from heaven, by ſigns and wonders and miracles, eſpecially by the reſurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead; for *by this he hath given aſſurance unto all men, that it is he who is ordained of* GOD *to judge the quick and dead.*

Thus you ſee in what reſpect *the wrath of* GOD is ſaid to be *revealed from heaven*, in that the goſpel hath made a more clear, and particular, and certain diſcovery of the judgment of the great day, than ever was made to the world before. I proceed to the

Third obſervation, which I ſhall ſpeak but briefly to; namely, that every wicked and vicious practice doth expoſe men to this dreadful danger. The apoſtle inſtanceth in the two chief heads to which the ſins of men may be reduced, impiety towards GOD, and unrighteouſneſs towards men; and therefore he is to be underſtood to denounce *the wrath of* GOD againſt every particular

kind of ſin, coomprehended under theſe general heads; ſo that no man that allows himſelf in any impiety and wickedneſs of life, can hope to eſcape the wrath of GOD. Therefore it concerns us to be intirely religious, and *to have reſpect to all* GOD's *commandments*; and to take heed that we do not allow ourſelves in the practice of any kind of ſin whatſoever, becauſe the living in any one known ſin, is enough to expoſe us to the dreadful wrath of GOD. Though a man be juſt and righteous in his dealings with men, yet if he neglect the worſhip and ſervice of GOD, this will certainly bring him under condemnation: and, on the other hand, though a man may ſerve GOD never ſo diligently and devoutly, yet if he be defective in righteouſneſs toward men, if he deal falſly and fraudulently with his neighbour, he ſhall not eſcape the wrath of GOD; though a man pretend to never ſo much piety and devotion, yet if he be *unrighteous, he ſhall not inherit the kingdom of* GOD; if any man *over-reach and defraud his brother in any matter, the* LORD *is the avenger of ſuch*, ſaith St. Paul, 1 Theſſ. iv. 6.

So that here is a very powerful argument to take men off from all ſin, and to engage them to a conſtant and careful diſcharge of their whole duty toward GOD and men, and to reform whatever is amiſs either in the frame and temper of their minds, or in the actions and courſe of their lives; becauſe any kind of wickedneſs, any one ſort of vicious courſe, lays men open to the vengeance of GOD, and the puniſhments of another world; *the wrath of* GOD *is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs of men*: there is no exception in the caſe, we muſt forſake all ſin, ſubdue every luſt, *be holy in all manner of converſation*, otherwiſe we can have no reaſonable hopes of eſcaping *the wrath of* GOD, and the damnation of hell. But to proceed to the

Fourth obſervation; namely, that it is a very great aggravation of ſin, for men to offend againſt the light of their own minds. The apoſtle here aggravates the wickedneſs of the heathen world, that they did not live up to

to that knowledge which they had of GOD, but contradicted it in their lives, *holding the truth of* GOD *in unrighteousness*. And that he speaks here of the heathen, is plain from his following discourse, and the character he gives of those persons of whom he was speaking, *who hold the truth of* GOD *in unrighteousness*; *because that which may be known of* GOD *is manifest in them, for* GOD *hath shewn it unto them*; and this he proves, because those who were destitute of divine revelation, were not without all knowledge of GOD, being led by the sight of this visible world, to the knowledge of an Invisible Being and Power that was the author of it, ver. 20, 21. *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse*; *because that when they knew* GOD, *they glorified him not as* GOD, (*Hæc est summa delicti, nolle agnoscere, quem ignorare non possis*, saith Tertullian to the heathen; "This is "the height of thy fault, not to acknowledge him, "whom thou canst not but know, not to own him, of "whom thou canst not be ignorant if thou wouldst;) *neither were thankful*; they did not pay those acknowledgments to him which of right were due to the author of their being, and of all good things; *but became vain in their imaginations*; ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν, *they were fool'd with their own reasonings*. This he speaks of the philosophers, who in those great arguments of the Being and Providence of GOD, the immortality of the soul, and the rewards of another world, had lost the truth by too much subtilty about it, and had disputed themselves into doubt and uncertainty about those things which were naturally known; for *nimium altercando veritas amittitur*; "Truth is many times lost by too much contention and "dispute about it; and by too eager a pursuit of it, "Men many times out-run it; and leave it behind;" ver. 22. *and professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*. Men never play the fools more, than by endeavouring to be over subtle and wise; ver. 23. *and changed the*

glory of the incorruptible GOD, *into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things*; here he speaks of the sottishness of their idolatry, whereby they provoked GOD to give them up to all manner of lewdness and impurity, ver. 24. *wherefore* GOD *also gave them up unto uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts*; and again, ver. 26. *for this cause* GOD *gave them up to vile affections*; and then he enumerates the abominable lusts and vices they were guilty of, notwithstanding their natural acknowledgment of the divine justice, ver. 32. *who knowing the judgment of* GOD, *that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.* By all which it appears that he speaks of the heathen, who offended against the natural light of their own minds, and therefore were without excuse. *Quam sibi veniam sperare possunt impietatis suæ, qui non agnoscunt cultum ejus, quem prorsùs ignorari ab hominibus fas non est?* saith Lactantius, "How can they hope for pardon of their impiety, who "deny to worship that GOD, of whom it is not possible "mankind should be wholly ignorant?"

So that this is *to hold the truth in unrighteousness*, injuriously to suppress it, and to hinder the power and efficacy of it upon our minds and actions; for so the word κατέχειν sometimes signifies, as well as *to hold fast*; and this every man does, who acts contrary to what he believes and knows; he offers violence to the light of his own mind, and does injury to the truth, and keeps that a prisoner, which would set him free; *ye shall know the truth* (says our Lord) *and the truth shall make you free.*

And this is one of the highest aggravations of the sin of men, to offend against knowledge, and that light which GOD hath set up in every man's mind. If men wander and stumble in the dark, it is not to be wondered at; many times it is unavoidable, and no care can prevent it: but in the light it is expected men should look before them, and discern their way. That natural light which the heathen had, though it but was compar-

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tively dim and imperfect, yet the apoſtle takes notice of it as a great aggravation of their idolatrous and abominable practices. Thoſe natural notions which all men have of GOD, if they had in any meaſure attended to them, and governed themſelves by them, might have been ſufficient to have preſerved them from diſhonouring the Deity, by *worſhipping creatures inſtead of* GOD; the common light of nature was enough to have diſcovered to them the evil of thoſe lewd and unnatural practices, which many of them are guilty of, but they detained and ſuppreſſed the truth moſt injuriouſly, and would not ſuffer it to have it's natural and proper influence upon them; and this is that which left them without excuſe, that from the light of nature they had knowledge enough to have done better, and to have preſerved them from thoſe great crimes which were ſo common among them.

And if this was ſo great an aggravation of the impiety and wickedneſs of the heathen, and left them *without excuſe*, what apology can be made for the impiety and unrighteouſneſs of Chriſtians, who have ſo ſtrong and clear a light to diſcover to them their duty, and the danger of neglecting it, to whom *the wrath of* GOD *is* plainly *revealed from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men?* The truths of the goſpel are ſo very clear and powerful, and ſuch an improvement of natural light, that men muſt uſe great force and violence to ſuppreſs them, and to hinder the efficacy of them upon their lives. And this is a certain rule, by how much the greater our knowledge, by ſo much the leſs is our excuſe, and ſo much the greater puniſhment is due to our faults. So our Lord hath told us, Luke xii. 47. *That ſervant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes.* And John ix. 41. *If ye were blind* (ſays our SAVIOUR to the Jews) *ye ſhould have no ſin.* So much ignorance as there is of our Duty, ſo much abatement of the wilfulneſs of our faults: but *if we ſin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation*, ſays

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the apoſtle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 26, 27. *If we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*; implying that men cannot pretend ignorance for their faults, after ſo clear a revelation of the will of GOD, as is made to mankind by the goſpel.

And upon this conſideration it is, that our SAVIOUR doth ſo aggravate the impenitency and unbelief of the Jews, becauſe it was in oppoſition to all the advantages of knowledge, which can be imagined to be afforded to mankind, John xv. 22, 23, 24. *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them, they had not had ſin*; that is, in compariſon, their ſin had been much more excuſable; *but now they have no cloak for their ſin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father alſo. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had ſin; but now have they both ſeen, and hated both me, and my Father.* How is that? our SAVIOUR means, that they had now ſinned againſt all the advantages of knowing the will of GOD, that mankind could poſſibly have: at once oppoſing natural light, which was the diſpenſation of the Father; and the cleareſt revelation of GOD's will, in the diſpenſation of the goſpel by his Son; *Now have they both ſeen and hated both me and my Father.*

The two remaining obſervations I ſhall reſerve to another opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON CXII.

The danger of all known ſin, both from the light of nature and revelation.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

ROM. i. 18, 19.

For the wrath of GOD *is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs; becauſe that which may be known of* GOD *is manifeſt in them, for* GOD *hath ſhewed it unto them.*

I Have handled four of the obſervations which I raiſed from theſe words, and ſhall now proceed to the other two that remain.

Fifth obſervation, That the natural knowledge which men have of GOD, if they live contrary to it, is a ſufficient evidence of *their holding the truth of* GOD *in unrighteouſneſs*. For the reaſon why the apoſtle chargeth them with this, is *Becauſe that which may be known of* GOD *is manifeſt, in that* GOD *hath ſhewed it unto them.*

There is a natural knowledge of GOD, and of the duty we owe to him, which the apoſtle calls τὸ γνωϛὸν Θεȣ̃, *that of* GOD *which is obvious to be known* by the light of nature, and is as much as is abſolutely neceſſary for us to know. There is ſomething of GOD that is incomprehenſible, and beyond the reach of our underſtandings; but his being and eſſential perfections may be known, which he calls his *Eternal Power and Godhead*;

Godhead; *theſe*, he tells us, *are clearly ſeen, being understood by the things which are made*; that is, the creation of the world is a plain demonſtration to men, of the being and power of GOD; and if ſo, then GOD is *naturally known to men*; the contrary whereof *Socinus* poſitively maintains, though therein he be forſaken by moſt of his followers; an opinion, in my judgment, very unworthy of one, who, not without reaſon, was eſteemed ſo great a maſter of reaſon; and (though I believe he did not ſee it) undermining the ſtrongeſt and ſureſt foundation of all religion, which, when the natural notions of GOD, are once taken away, will certainly want it's beſt ſupport. Beſides that by denying any natural knowledge of GOD, and his eſſential perfections, he freely gives away one of the moſt plauſible grounds of oppoſing the doctrine of the Trinity. But becauſe this is a matter of great conſequence, and he was a great man, and is not to be confuted by contempt, but by better reaſon, if it can be found; I will conſider his reaſons for this opinion, and return a particular anſwer to them.

Firſt, He ſays that if the knowledge of GOD were natural, it would not be of faith; but the apoſtle ſays that *we muſt believe that he is*. The force of which argument, if it have any, lies in this, that the object of faith is divine revelation, and therefore we cannot be ſaid to believe what we naturally know. The ſchoolmen indeed ſay ſo; but the ſcripture uſeth the word faith more largely, for a real perſuaſion of any thing, whether grounded upon ſenſe, or reaſon, or divine revelation. And our SAVIOUR's ſpeech to Thomas, *becauſe thou haſt ſeen, thou haſt believed*, doth ſufficiently intimate that a man may believe what he ſees; and if ſo, what ſhould hinder, but that a man be ſaid to believe what he naturally knows; that is, be really perſuaded that there is a GOD from natural light?

Secondly, His next argument is, becauſe the ſame apoſtle concludes Enoch to have believed GOD, becauſe he pleaſed GOD, *and without faith it is impoſſible to please him*. From whence he ſays it is certain, that men

may be without this belief; which, if it be natural, they cannot. Indeed, if the apoſtle had ſaid, that whoever believes a GOD, muſt of neceſſity obey and pleaſe him, then the inference had been good, that all men do not naturally believe a GOD, becauſe it is certain they do not pleaſe him: but it is not good the other way, no more than if a man ſhould argue thus, that becauſe whoever acts reaſonable, muſt be endowed with reaſon, therefore men are not naturally endowed with reaſon. For as men may naturally be endowed with reaſon, and yet not always make uſe of it; ſo men may naturally know and believe a GOD, and yet not be careful to pleaſe him.

His third argument is, that the ſcripture ſays that there are ſome that do not believe a GOD, for which he cites that of David, *The fool hath ſaid in his heart there is* no GOD; which certainly proves, that bad men live ſo, as if they believed there were no GOD; nay, it may farther import, that they endeavour as much as they can, to ſtifle and extinguiſh the belief of a GOD in their minds, and would gladly perſuade themſelves there is no GOD, becauſe it is convenient for them there ſhould be none; and whether David meant ſo or not, it is very probable that ſome may arrive to that height of impiety, as for a time at leaſt, and in ſome moods, to diſbelieve a GOD, and to be very confident of the arguments on that ſide. But what then? is the knowledge and belief of a GOD therefore not natural to mankind? nature itſelf, as conſtant and uniform as it is, admits of ſome irregularities and exceptions, in effects that are meerly natural, much more in thoſe which have ſomething in them that is voluntary, and depends upon the good or bad uſe of our reaſon and underſtanding; and there is no arguing from what is monſtrous, againſt what is natural. It is natural for men to have five fingers upon a hand, and yet ſome are born otherwiſe; but in voluntary agents, that which is natural may be perverted, and in a great meaſure extinguiſhed in ſome particular inſtances; ſo that there is no force at all in his objection.

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His fourth and last argument is, that there have n only been particular persons, but whole nations w have had no sense, nor so much as suspicion of a dei This I confess were of great force, if it were true ; a for the proof of this, he produceth the instance Brasil in America. But I utterly deny the the mat of fact and history, and challenge any man to bri good testimony, not only of any nation, but of any c in the world, that ever were professed Atheists. know this was affirmed of some part of Brasil, by so of the first discoverers, who yet at the same ti owned, that these very people did most expressly beli the immortality of the soul, and the rewards a punishments of another life ; opinions which no m can well reconcile with the denial and disbelief of Deity. But to put an end to this argument, later a more perfect discoveries have found this not to be tr and do assure us upon better acquaintance with th barbarous people, that they are deeply possess'd with t belief of one supreme GOD, who made and governs t world.

Having thus given a particular answer to Socinu arguments against the natural knowledge of a GOD, will now briefly offer some arguments for it. And prove that the knowledge and belief of a GOD is n tural to mankind : My

First argument shall be from the universal consent this matter, of all nations in all ages. And this is argument of great force, there being no better way prove any thing to be natural to any kind of being, th if it be generally found in the whole kind. *Omni consensus naturæ vox est,* " the consent of all is t " voice of nature, saith Tully." And indeed by wh other argument can we prove that reason, and speec and an inclination to society, are natural to men ; b that these belong to the whole kind ?

Secondly, Unless the knowledge of GOD and essential perfections be natural, I do not see w sufficient and certain foundation there can be of revea religion. For unless we naturally know GOD to b be

being of all perfection, and consequently that whatever he says is true, I cannot see what divine revelation can signify. For GOD's revealing or declaring such a thing to us, is no necessary argument that it is so, unless antecedently to this revelation, we be possest firmly with this principle, that whatever GOD says is true. And whatever is known antecedently to revelation, must be known by natural light, and by reasonings and deductions from natural principles. I might further add to this argument, that the only standard and measure to judge of divine revelations, and to distinguish between what are true, and what are counterfeit, are the natural notions which men have of GOD, and of his essential perfections.

Thirdly, If the notion of a GOD be not natural, I do not see how men can have any natural notion of the difference of moral good and evil, just and unjust. For if I do not naturally know there is a GOD, how can I naturally know that there is any law obliging to the one, and forbidding the other? All law and obligation to obedience, necessarily supposing the authority of a superior being. But the apostle expresly asserts, that *the Gentiles*, who were destitute of a revealed law, *were a law unto themselves*; but there cannot be a natural law obliging mankind, unless GOD be naturally known to them.

And this Socinus himself in his discourse upon this very argument is forced to acknowledge. "In all men (says he) there is naturally a difference of just, and unjust, or at least there is planted in all men an acknowledgment that just ought to be preferred before unjust, and that which is honest, before the contrary; and this is nothing else but the word of GOD within a man, which whosoever obeys, in so doing obeys GOD, though otherwise he neither know nor think there is a GOD; and there is no doubt but he that thus obeys GOD, is accepted of him." So that here is an acknowledgment of a natural obligation to a duty, without any natural knowledge of a superior authority; which I think cannot be; and which is worse,

that a man may obey GOD acceptably, without knowing and believing there is a GOD; which directly thwarts the ground of his first argument, from those words of the apostle, *Without faith it is impossible to please* GOD *for he that cometh to* GOD, that is, he that will be religious and please GOD *must believe that he is*; so hard it for any man to contradict nature, without contradicting himself.

Fourthly, My last argument I ground upon the words of the apostle in my text, *That which may be known of* GOD, *is manifested in them*; *for* GOD *hath shewed unto them. Is manifested in them*, ἐν αὐτοῖς *among them.* GOD hath sufficiently manifested it to mankind. And which way hath GOD done this? by revelation or by the natural light of reason? He tells us at the 20th ver. *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen*; that is, GOD, who in himself is invisible, ever since he hath created the world, hath given a visible demonstration of himself, that is, of *his eternal power and Godhead, being understood by the things which are made.* The plain sense of the whole is, that this wise and wonderful frame of the world, which cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other cause but GOD, is a sensible demonstration to all mankind, of an eternal and powerful being that was the author and framer of it. The only question now is, Whether this text speaks of the knowledge of GOD by particular revelation, or by natural light and reason from the contemplation of the works of GOD? Socinus having no other way to avoid the force of this text, was needs understand it of the knowledge of GOD by the revelation of the gospel. His words are these; "The "apostle therefore says in this place, that the eternal "Godhead of GOD, that is, that which GOD would "ways have us to do (for *the Godhead* is sometimes "taken in this sense) and his eternal power, that "his promise which never fails (in which sense he "a little before that the gospel is the power of God) "these I say, which were never seen by men, that "

were never known to them since the creation of the world, are known by his works, that is, by the wonderful operation of GOD, and divine men, especially of CHRIST and his apoſtles." Theſe are his very words, and now I refer it to any indifferent judgment, whether this be not a very forced and conſtrained interpretation of this text; and whether that which I have before given, be not infinitely more free and natural, and every way more agreeable to the obvious ſenſe of the words, and the ſcope of the apoſtle's argument. For he plainly ſpeaks of the Heathen, and proves them to be inexcuſable, becauſe *they held the truth in unrighteouſneſs*, and having a natural knowledge of GOD, from the contemplation of his works, and the things which are made, *they did not glorify him as* GOD. And therefore I ſhall not trouble myſelf to give any other anſwer to ; for by the abſurd violence of it in every part, it confutes itſelf more effectually than any diſcourſe about it can do.

I have been the larger upon this, becauſe it is a matter of ſo great conſequence, and lies at the bottom of all religion. For the natural knowledge which men have of GOD, is, when all is done, the ſureſt and faſteſt hold that religion hath on human nature. Beſides, how could GOD judge that part of the world who are wholly deſtitute of divine revelation, if they had no natural knowledge of him, and conſequently could not be under the direction and government of any law? For *where there is no law, there is no tranſgreſſion*; and where men are guilty of the breach of no law, they cannot be judged and condemned for it; for *the judgment of* GOD *is according to truth.*

And now this being eſtabliſhed, that men have a natural knowledge of GOD; if they contradict it by their life and practice, they are guilty of *detaining the truth of* GOD *in unrighteouſneſs.* For by this argument the apoſtle proves the Heathen to be guilty of *holding the truth in unrighteouſneſs*, becauſe notwithſtanding the natural knowledge which they had of GOD *by the things which*

are made, they lived in the practice of groſs idolatry, and the moſt abominable ſins and vices.

And this concerns us much more, who have the glorious light of the goſpel added to the light of nature. For if they who offended againſt the light of nature, were liable to the judgment of GOD, of how much ſorer puniſhment ſhall we be thought worthy, if we neglect thoſe infinite advantages which the revelation of the goſpel hath ſuperadded to natural light? He hath now ſet our duty in the cleareſt and ſtrongeſt light that ever was afforded to mankind, ſo that if we will not now believe and repent, there is no remedy for us, but we muſt *die in our ſins*; *if we ſin wilfully, after ſo much knowledge of the truth, there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin*; *but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to conſume us.*

The ſum of what has been ſaid on this argument, is briefly this; that men have a natural knowledge of GOD, and of thoſe great duties which reſult from the knowledge of him; ſo that whatever men ſay and pretend, as to the main things of religion, *the worſhip of* GOD, *and juſtice and righteouſneſs towards men,* ſetting aſide divine revelation, we are all naturally convinced of our duty, and of what we ought to do, and thoſe who live in a bad courſe, need only be put in mind of what they naturally know, better than any body elſe can tell them, that they are in a bad courſe; ſo that I may appeal to all wicked men from themſelves, raſh, and heated, and intoxicated with pleaſure and vanity, tranſported and hurried away by luſt and paſſion, to themſelves ſerious and compoſed, and in a cool and conſiderate temper. And can any ſober man forbear to follow the convictions of his own mind, and to reſolve to do what he inwardly conſents to as beſt? Let us but be true to ourſelves, and obey the dictates of our own minds, and give leave to our own conſcience to counſel us, and tell us what we ought to do, and we ſhall be a *law to ourſelves.* I proceed to the

Sixth and laſt obſervation, namely, that the clear revelation of the wrath of GOD in the goſpel, againſt the impiet

impiety and unrighteouſneſs of men, is one principal thing, which renders it ſo very powerful, and likely a means for the ſalvation of mankind. For the apoſtle inſtanceth in two things, which give the goſpel ſo great an advantage to this purpoſe, the mercy of GOD to penitent ſinners, and his ſeverity toward the impenitent; both which are ſo fully and clearly revealed in the goſpel. *The goſpel is the power of* GOD *to ſalvation, to every one that believeth, becauſe therein the righteouſneſs of* GOD *is revealed*; that is, his great grace and mercy in the juſtification and pardon of ſinners by JESUS CHRIST, which I have already ſhewn to be meant by *the righteouſneſs of* GOD, by comparing this with the explication which is given of *the righteouſneſs of* GOD, chap. iii. ver. 22.

The other reaſon which he gives of the goſpel's being *the power of* GOD *to ſalvation*, is the plain declaration of the ſeverity of GOD towards impenitent ſinners, *becauſe therein* alſo *the wrath of* GOD *is revealed from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men.* The force of which argument will appear, if we conſider theſe following particulars.

Firſt, That the declarations of the goſpel in this matter are ſo plain and expreſs.

Secondly, That they are very dreadful and terrible.

Thirdly, That there is no ſafety or hope of impunity for men that go on and continue in their ſins.

Fourthly, That this argument will take hold of the moſt deſperate and profligate ſinners, and ſtill retain its force upon the minds of men, when all other conſiderations fail, and are of little or no efficacy. And,

Fifthly, That no religion in the world can urge this argument with that force and advantage that Chriſtianity does.

Firſt, That the declarations of the goſpel in this matter, are moſt plain and expreſs; and that not only againſt ſin and wickedneſs in general, but againſt particular ſins and vices; ſo that no man that lives in any ſinful and vicious courſe, can be ignorant of his danger.

Our LORD hath told us in general, what shall be the doom of the workers of iniquity, yea, though they may have owned him, and made profession of his name: Matth. vii. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me,* LORD, LORD, *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day,* LORD LORD, *&c. then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity.* Matth. xiii. 49, 50. *So shall it be at the end of the world, the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* Matth. xxv. 46. *The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteousness into life eternal.* John v. 28, 29. *The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.* Rom. ii. 6. St Paul tell us that there is *a day of wrath, and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of* GOD, *who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil.* 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9. that *the* LORD JESUS *shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not* GOD, *and that obey not the gospel of our* LORD JESUS CHRIST; *who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the* LORD, *and from the glory of his power.* Nothing can be more plain and express than these general declarations of the wrath of GOD against sinners; that there is a day of judgment appointed, and a judge constituted to take cognizance of the actions of men, to pass a severe sentence, and inflict a terrible punishment upon the workers of iniquity.

More particularly our LORD and his apostles have denounced the wrath of GOD against particular sins and vices. In several places of the New Testament, the

catalogues given of particular ſins, the practice where-
of will certainly ſhut men out of the kingdom of
heaven, and expoſe them to the wrath and vengeance
of GOD. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Know ye not that the un-
righteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of* GOD? *Be not
deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,
nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind,
nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor
extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of* GOD. So like-
wiſe, Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. *The works of the fleſh are
manifeſt, which are theſe, adultery, fornication, witch-
craft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſedi-
tions, hereſies, envyings, murthers, drunkenneſs, revellings,
and ſuch like: of the which I tell you before, as I have
alſo told you in times paſt, that they that do ſuch things
ſhall not inherit the kingdom of* GOD. Col. iii. 5, 6.
*Mortify therefore your members upon earth, fornication,
uncleanneſs, inordinate affection, evil concupiſcence, and
covetouſneſs, which is idolatry, for which things ſake the
wrath of* GOD *cometh on the children of diſobedience.*
Rev. xxi. 8. *The fearful and unbelieving*, (that is, thoſe
who rejected the Chriſtian religion, notwithſtanding the
clear evidence that was offered for it, and thoſe who out of
fear ſhould apoſtatize from it) *the fearful and unbeliev-
ing, and the abominable*, (that is, thoſe who were guilty of
unnatural luſts, not fit to be named) *and murderers,
and whoremongers, and ſorcerers, and idolaters, and all
liars*, (that is, all ſorts of falſe and deceitful and perfi-
dious perſons) *ſhall have their part in the lake which
burns with fire and brimſtone, which is the ſecond death.*
And not only theſe groſs and notorious ſins, which
are ſuch plain violations of the law and light of nature;
but thoſe wherein mankind have been apt to take more
liberty, as if they were not ſufficiently convinced of the
evil of them; as *the reſiſting of civil authority*, which
the apoſtle tells us, they that are guilty of, *ſhall receive
to themſelves damnation.* Rom. xiii. 2. *Prophane ſwear-
ing in common converſation*, which St James tells us
brings men under the danger of *damnation*, chap. v. 12.
Above all things, my brethren, ſwear not, leſt ye fall
under

under condemnation. Nay, our SAVIOUR hath told us plainly, that not only for *wicked actions*, but for *every evil and ſinful word*, men are obnoxious to the judgment of GOD. So our LORD aſſures us, Matth. xii. 36, 37. *I ſay unto you, that every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.* He had ſpoken before of that great and unpardonable ſin of *blaſpheming the Holy Ghoſt*; and becauſe this might be thought great ſeverity for evil words, he declares the reaſon more fully, becauſe words ſhew the mind and temper of the man, ver. 34. *For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh.* "The character of "the man is ſhewn by his words, ſaith Menander." *Profert enim mores plerumque oratio* (ſaith Quintilian) *& animi ſecreta detegit*; "A man's ſpeech diſcovers his "manners, and the ſecrets of his heart;" *ut vivere etiam quumque decere*, men commonly ſpeak as they live; and therefore our SAVIOUR adds, *A good man out of the good treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things: but I ſay unto you that every idle word,* πᾶν ῥῆμα ἀργὸν, by which I do not think our SAVIOUR means, that men ſhall be called to a ſolemn account at the day of judgment, for *every trifling*, and *impatient* and *unprofitable word*, but *every wicked and ſinful word* of any kind, as if he had ſaid, do you think this ſevere to make words an unpardonable fault? I ſay unto you, that men ſhall not only be condemned for their malicious and blaſphemous ſpeeches againſt the Holy Ghoſt; but they ſhall likewiſe give a ſtrict account for all other *wicked and ſinful ſpeeches*, in any kind, though much inferior to this. And this is not only moſt agreeable to the ſcope of our SAVIOUR, but is confirmed by ſome Greek copies, in which it is πᾶν ῥῆμα πονηρὸν, *every wicked word which men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall be accountable for it at the day of judgment.* But this by the bye.

Our SAVIOUR likewiſe tells us, that men ſhall not only be proceeded againſt for ſins of commiſſion, but for th

here omiſſion and neglect of their duty, eſpecially in works of mercy and charity; for *not feeding the hungry*, and the like, as we ſee, Matth. xxv. and that for the omiſſion of theſe, he will paſs that terrible ſentence, *Depart ye curſed*, &c. So that it nearly concerns us to be careful of our whole life, of all our words and actions, ſince the goſpel hath ſo plainly and expreſsly declared, that *for all theſe things* GOD *will bring us into judgment*. And if the threatnings of the goſpel be true, *What manner of perſons ought we to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs*.

Secondly, as the threatnings of the goſpel are very plain and expreſs, ſo are they likewiſe very dreadful and terrible. I want words to expreſs the leaſt part of the terror of them; and yet the expreſſions of ſcripture concerning the miſery and puniſhment of ſinners in another world, are ſuch as may juſtly raiſe amazement and horror in thoſe that hear them. Sometimes it is expreſſed *by a departing from* GOD, and a perpetual baniſhment *from his preſence*, who is the fountain of all comfort, and joy, and happineſs; ſometimes by *the loſs of our ſouls*, or *ourſelves*. *What ſhall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?* Or, (as it is in another evangeliſt) *to loſe himſelf?* Not that our being ſhall be deſtroyed; that would be a happy loſs indeed, to him that is ſentenced to be for ever miſerable; but the man ſhall ſtill remain, and his body and ſoul continue to be the foundation of his miſery, and a ſcene of perpetual woe and diſcontent, which our Saviour calls *deſtroying of body and ſoul in hell*, or *going into everlaſting puniſhment*, *where there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth*, *where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched*. Could I repreſent to you the horror of that diſmal priſon, into which wicked and impure ſouls are to be thruſt, and the miſery they muſt there endure, without the leaſt ſpark of comfort, or glimmering of hope, how they wail and groan under the intolerable wrath of GOD, the inſolent ſcorn and cruelty of devils, the ſevere laſhes and ſtings, the raging anguiſh and horrible deſpair of their own minds, without intermiſſion,

without

without pity, and without hope of ever seeing an end of that misery, which yet is unsupportable for one moment: could I represent these things to you according to the terror of them, what effect must they have upon us? and with what patience could any man bear to think of plunging himself into this misery? and by his own wilful fault and folly to endanger his *coming into this place* and state *of torments*? Especially if we consider in the

Third place, that the gospel hath likewise declared, that there is no avoiding of this misery, no hopes of impunity, if men go on and continue in their sins. The terms of the gospel in this are peremptory, that *except we repent, we shall perish*; that *without holiness, no man shall see the* LORD; that *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of* GOD. And this is a very pressing consideration, and brings the matter to a short and plain issue. Either we must leave our sins, or die in them; either we must repent of them, or be judged for them; either we must forsake our sins, and break off that wicked course which we have lived in, or we must quit all hopes of heaven and happiness, nay, we cannot *escape the damnation of hell*. The clear revelation of a future judgment is so pressing an argument to repentance, as no man can in reason resist, that hath not a mind to be miserable. *Now* (saith St Paul to the Athenians) *he straitly chargeth all men every-where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness*.

Men may cheat themselves, or suffer themselves to be deluded by others, about several means and devices of reconciling a wicked life, with the hopes of heaven and eternal salvation; as by mingling some pangs of sorrow for sin, and some hot fits of devotion with a sinful life; which is only the interruption of a wicked course without reformation and amendment of life: but *let no man deceive you with vain words*; for our blessed SAVIOUR hath provided no other ways to save men, but upon the terms of repentance and obedience.

Fourthly, this argument takes hold of the most desperate and profligate sinners, and still retains it's force up

on the minds of men, when almoſt all other conſiderations fail, and have loſt their efficacy upon us. Many men are gone ſo far in an evil courſe, that neither ſhame of their vices, nor the love of GOD and virtue, nor the hopes of heaven, are of any force with them, to reclaim them and bring them to a better mind: but there is one handle yet left, whereby to lay hold of them, and that is their fear. This is a paſſion that lies deep in our nature, being founded in ſelf-preſervation, and ſticks ſo cloſely to us, that we cannot quit ourſelves of it, nor ſhake it off. Men may put off ingenuity, and break through all obligations of gratitude. Men may harden their foreheads, and conquer all ſenſe of ſhame; but they can never perfectly ſtifle and ſubdue their fears; they can hardly ſo extinguiſh the fear of hell, but that ſome ſparks of that fire will ever and anon be flying about in their conſciences, eſpecially when they are made ſober, and brought to themſelves by affliction, and by the preſent apprehenſions of death, have a nearer ſight of another world. And if it was ſo hard for the Heathen to conquer theſe apprehenſions, how much harder muſt it be to Chriſtians, who have ſo much greater aſſurance of theſe things, and to whom *the wrath of* GOD *is* ſo clearly *revealed from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men?*

Fifthly, No religion in the world ever urged this argument upon men, with that force and advantage which Chriſtianity does. The philoſophy of the Heathen gave them no ſteady aſſurance of the thing; the moſt knowing perſons among them were not agreed about a future ſtate; the greateſt part of them ſpake but doubtfully concerning another life. And beſides the natural jealouſies and ſuſpicions of mankind concerning theſe things, they had only ſome fair probabilities of reaſon, and the authority of their poets, who talked they knew not what about the Elyſian Fields, and the infernal regions, and the three judges of hell; ſo that the wiſeſt among them had hardly aſſurance enough in themſelves of the truth of the thing, to preſs it upon others with any

great

great confidence, and therefore it was not likely to have any great efficacy upon the generality of mankind.

As for the Jewish religion; though that supposed and took for granted the rewards of another world, as a principle of natural religion; yet in the law of Moses there was no particular and express revelation of the life of the world to come; and what was deduced from it, was by remote and obscure consequence. Temporal promises and threatnings it had many and clear, and their eyes were so dazzled with these, that it is probable that the generality of them did but little consider a future state till they fell into great temporal calamities under the Grecian and Roman empires, whereby they were almost necessarily awakened to the consideration and hopes of a better life, to relieve them under their present evils and sufferings; and yet even in that time they were divided into two great factions about this matter, the one affirming, and the other as confidently denying any life after this. *But the gospel hath brought life and immortality to light*, as we are assured from heaven of the truth and reality of another state, and a future judgment. The Son of God was sent into the world to preach this doctrine, and rose again from the dead, and was taken up into heaven, for a visible demonstration to all mankind of another life after this, and consequently of a future judgment, which no man ever doubted of, that did firmly believe a future state.

The sum of all that I have said is this; the gospel hath plainly declared to us, that the only way to salvation is by forsaking our sins, and living a holy and virtuous life; and the most effectual argument in the world to perswade men to this, is the consideration of the infinite danger that a sinful course exposeth men to, since the wrath of God continually hangs over sinners, and if they continue in their sins, will certainly fall upon them and overwhelm them with misery; and he that is not moved by this argument, is lost to all intents and purposes.

All that now remains, is to urge this argument upon men, and from the serious consideration of it, to per-

swa-

swade them to repent, and reform their wicked lives. And was there ever age wherein this was more needful? when iniquity doth not only abound, but even rage among us; when infidelity and profaneneſs, and all manner of lewdneſs and vice, appear ſo boldly and openly, and men commit the greateſt abominations without bluſhing at them; when vice hath got ſuch head that it can hardly bear to be checked and controuled, and when, as the Roman hiſtorian complains of his times, *Ad ea tempora, quibus nec vitia noſtra nec remedia pati poſſumus, perventum eſt*; "things are come to that paſs, that we can "neither bear our vices, nor the remedies of them." Our vices are grown to a prodigious and intolerable height, and yet men hardly have the patience to hear of them; and ſurely a diſeaſe is then dangerous indeed, when it cannot bear the ſeverity that is neceſſary to a cure. But yet, notwithſtanding this, we who are the meſſengers of GOD to men, to warn them of their ſin and danger, muſt not keep ſilence, and ſpare to tell them both of their ſins, and of the judgment of GOD which hangs over them; that GOD *will viſit for theſe things*, and that *his ſoul will be avenged on ſuch a nation as this*. At leaſt we may have leave to warn others, who are not yet *run to the ſame exceſs of riot, to ſave themſelves from this untoward generation*. GOD's *judgments are abroad in the earth*, and call aloud upon us, *to learn righteouſneſs*.

But this is but a ſmall conſideration, in compariſon of the judgment of another world, which we, who call our ſelves Chriſtians, do profeſs to believe, as one of the chief articles of our faith. The conſideration of this ſhould check and cool us in the heat of all our ſinful pleaſures; and that bitter irony of Solomon ſhould cut us to the heart; *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the ſight of thine eyes; but know that for all theſe things* GOD *will bring thee into judgment*. Think often and ſeriouſly on that time, wherein *the wrath of* GOD, which is now *revealed againſt ſin*, ſhall be *executed* upon ſinners; and

if we believe this, we are ſtrangely ſtupid and obſtinate if we be not moved by it. The aſſurance of this mat St Paul extremely importunate in exhorting men t avoid ſo great a danger, 2 *Cor.* v. 10, 11. *We muſt a appear before the judgment-ſeat of* CHRIST, *that eve one may receive the things done in the body, according what he hath done, whether it be good or evil. Knowi therefore the terrors of the* LORD, *we perſuade men.* A if this ought to move us to take ſo great a care of *othe* much more of *our ſelves.* The judgment to come is very amazing conſideration, it is a fearful thing to he of it, but it will be much more terrible to ſee it, eſp cially to thoſe whoſe guilt muſt needs make them heartily concerned in the diſmal conſequences of it; a yet as ſure as I ſtand, and you ſit here, *this great a terrible day of the* LORD *will come,* and *who may abi his coming!* What will we do, when that day ſhall ſu prize us careleſs and unprepared! what unſpeakable ho ror and amazement will then take hold of us! wh *lifting up our eyes to heaven, we ſhall ſee the Son of M coming in the clouds of it, with power, and great glor* when that powerful voice, which ſhall pierce the e of the dead, ſhall ring through the world, *Ariſe dead, and come to judgment*; when the mighty *trump* ſhall ſound, and wake the ſleepers of a thouſand year and ſummon the diſperſed parts of the bodies of all m that ever lived, to rally together and take their place and the ſouls and bodies of men, which have been long ſtrangers to one another, ſhall meet and be unit again, to receive the doom due to their deeds; wh fear ſhall then ſurprize ſinners, and how will they trem ble at the preſence of the great judge, and *for the gl of his majeſty!* How will their conſcience fly in th faces, and their own hearts condemn them, for th wicked and ungodly lives, and even prevent that ſe tence, which yet ſhall certainly be paſt and execut upon them. But I will proceed no further in this a gument, which hath ſo much of terror in it.

I will conclude my ſermon, as Solomon doth his *Ec ſiaſtes,* ch. xii. 13, 14. *Let us hear the concluſion of wh*

whole matter; fear God, *and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man; for* God *ſhall bring every work into judgment, and every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* To which I will only add that ſerious and merciful admonition of *a greater than Solomon*, I mean the great judge of the whole world, our bleſſed Lord and Saviour, *Luke* xxi. 34, 35, 36. *Take heed to your ſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting, and drunkenneſs, and the cares of this life, and ſo that day come upon you at unawares. For as a ſnare ſhall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs, and to ſtand before the Son of Man*; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, *&c.*

SERMON CXIII.

Knowledge and practice neceſſary in religion.

JOHN xiii. 17.

If ye know theſe things, happy are ye if ye do them.

TWO things make up religion, the *knowledge*, and the *practice* of it; and the *firſt* is wholly in order to the *ſecond*; and God hath not revealed to us the knowledge of himſelf and his will, merely for the improvement of our underſtanding, but for the bettering of our hearts and lives; not to entertain

tertain our minds with the ſpeculations of religion and virtue, but to form and govern our actions. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

In which words, our bleſſed Saviour does from a particular inſtance take occaſion to ſettle a general concluſion; namely, that religion doth mainly conſiſt in practice, and that the knowledge of his doctrine, without the real effects of it upon our lives, will bring no man to heaven. In the beginning of this chapter, our great LORD and MASTER, to teſtify his love to his diſciples and to give them a lively inſtance and example of the great virtue of humility, is pleaſed to condeſcend to a very low and mean office, ſuch as was uſed to be performed by ſervants to their maſters, and not by the maſter to his ſervants; namely, to waſh their feet: and when he had done this, he aſks them if they did underſtand the meaning of this ſtrange action. *Know ye what I have done unto you? ye call me maſter, and* LORD, *and ye ſay well, for ſo I am; If I then your* LORD *and maſter have waſhed your feet, ye alſo ought to waſh one anothers feet; for I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, the ſervant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is ſent, greater than he that ſent him; if ye know theſe things, happy are ye if ye do them.* As if he had ſaid, this which I have now done, is eaſy to be underſtood, and ſo likewiſe are all thoſe other Chriſtian graces and virtues, which I have heretofore by my doctrine and example recommended to you; but it is not enough to know theſe things, but ye muſt likewiſe *do* them. The end and the life of all our knowledge in religion, is to put in practice what we know. It is neceſſary indeed that we ſhould know our duty, but knowledge alone will never bring us to that happineſs which religion deſigns to make us partakers of, if our knowledge have not it's due and proper influence upon our lives. Nay, ſo far will our knowledge be from making us happy, if it be ſeparated from the virtues of a good life, that it will prove one of the heavieſt aggravations of our miſery; and it is as if he had ſaid,

ye know theſe things, two be unto you if ye do them not.

From theſe words then, I ſhall obſerve theſe three things, which I ſhall ſpeak but briefly to.

First, That the knowledge of GOD's will, and our duty, is neceſſary to the practice of it; *If ye know theſe things*, which ſuppoſeth that we muſt *know* our duty, before we can *do* it.

Secondly, That the knowledge of our duty, and the practice of it, may be, and too often are, ſeparated. This likewiſe the text ſuppoſeth, that men may know their duty, and yet not do it, and that this is very frequent, which is the reaſon why our SAVIOUR gives this caution.

Thirdly, That the practice of religion, and the doing of what we know to be our duty, is the only way to happineſs; *If ye know theſe things, happy are ye if ye do them.* I begin with the

First of theſe, namely, That the knowledge of GOD's will and our duty, is neceſſary in order to the practice of it. The truth of this propoſition is ſo clear and evident at firſt view, that nothing can obſcure it, and bring it in queſtion, but to endeavour to prove it; and therefore inſtead of ſpending time in that, I ſhall take occaſion from it, juſtly to reprove that prepoſterous courſe which is taken, and openly avowed and juſtified by ſome, as the ſafeſt and beſt way to make men religious, and to bring them to happineſs; namely, by taking away from them the means of knowledge; as if the beſt way to bring men *to do the will of* GOD, were to keep them from *knowing it*. For what elſe can be the meaning of that maxim ſo current in the church of Rome, that *ignorance is the mother of devotion?* or of that ſtrange and injurious practice of theirs of locking up from the people that great ſtore-houſe and treaſury of divine knowledge, the holy Scriptures, in an unknown tongue?

I know very well, that, in juſtification of this hard uſage of their people, it is pretended that knowledge is apt to puff men up, to make them proud and con-

tentious, refractory and disobedient, and heretical, and what not? and particularly, that the free and familiar use of the holy Scriptures permitted to the people, hath ministred occasion to the people of falling into great and dangerous errors, and of making great disturbance and divisions among Christians. For answer to this pretence, I desire these four or five things may be considered.

First, That unless this be the natural and necessary effect of knowledge in religion, and of the free use of the holy Scriptures, there is no force in this reason: and if this be the proper and natural effect of this knowledge, then this reason will reach a great way farther than those who make use of it are willing it should.

Secondly, That this is not the natural and necessary effect of knowledge in religion, but only accidental, and proceeding from men's abuse of it; for which the thing itself is not to be taken away.

Thirdly, That the proper and natural effects and consequences of ignorance, are equally pernicious, and much more certain and unavoidable, than those which are accidentally occasioned by knowledge.

Fourthly, That if this reason be good, it is much stronger for withholding the Scriptures from the priest and the learned, than from the people.

Fifthly, That this danger was as great, and as well known, in the apostles times, and yet they took a quite contrary course.

First, I desire it may be considered that unless this be the natural and necessary effect of knowledge in religion and of the free use of the holy Scriptures, there is no force in this reason; for that which is necessary, and highly useful, ought not to be taken away, because it is liable to be perverted, and abused to ill purposes. If it ought, then not only knowledge in religion, but all other knowledge ought to be restrained and suppress; for all knowledge is apt to puff up, and liable to be abused to many ill purposes. At this rate, light and liberty and reason, yea and life itself, ought all to be taken away, because they are all greatly abused by many men

ſome ill purpoſes or other; ſo that unleſs theſe ill effects do naturally and neceſſarily ſpring from knowledge in religion, the objection from them is of no force; and if they do neceſſarily flow from it, then this reaſon will reach a great way further than thoſe that make uſe of it are willing it ſhould; for if this be true, that the knowledge of religion, as it is revealed in the holy Scriptures, is of it's own nature, ſo pernicious, as to make men proud and contentious and heretical, and diſobedient to authority, then the blame of all this would fall upon our Bleſſed SAVIOUR, for revealing ſo pernicious a doctrine, and upon his apoſtles, for publiſhing this doctrine in a known tongue to all mankind, and thereby laying the foundation of perpetual ſchiſms and hereſies in the Church.

Secondly, But this is not the natural and neceſſary effect of knowledge in religion, but only accidental, and proceeding from men's abuſe of it, for which the thing itſelf ought not to be taken away. And thus much certainly they will grant, becauſe it cannot with any face be denied; and if ſo, then the means of knowledge are not to be denied, but only men are to be cautioned not to pervert and abuſe them. And if any man abuſe the holy Scriptures to the patronizing of error or hereſy, or to any other bad purpoſe, he does it at his peril, and muſt give an account to GOD for it, but ought not to be deprived of the means of knowledge, for fear he ſhould make an ill uſe of them. We muſt not hinder men from being Chriſtians, to preſerve them from being hereticks, and put out mens eyes, for fear they ſhould ſome time or other take upon them to diſpute their way with their guides.

I remember that St Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 1. takes notice of this accidental inconvenience of knowledge, that *it puffeth up*, and that this pride occaſioned great contentions and diviſions among them: but the remedy which he preſcribes againſt this miſchief of knowledge is not to with-hold from men the means of it, and to celebrate the ſervice of GOD, the prayers of the Church, and the reading of the Scriptures *in an unknown tongue*, but

but quite contrary. Chap. xiv. of that epiſtle, h ſtrictly enjoins that the ſervice of GOD in the Church b ſo performed, as may be for the edification of the peo ple; which he ſays cannot be, if it be celebrated *in a unknown tongue*; and the remedy he preſcribes again the accidental miſchief and inconvenience of knowledg is not ignorance; but charity to govern their knowledg and to help them to make right uſe of it; ver. 20, that chapter, after he had declared that the ſervice GOD ought to be performed *in a known tongue*, he im mediately adds, *Brethren, be not children in underſtand ing; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in underſtand ing be ye men.* He commends knowledge, he encou rageth it, he requires it of all Chriſtians; ſo far is h from checking the purſuit of it, and depriving the peo ple of the means of it. And indeed there is nothing i the Chriſtian religion, but what is fit for every man t know, becauſe there is nothing in it, but what is de ſigned to promote holineſs and a good life; and if me make any other uſe of their knowledge, it is their ow fault, for it certainly tends to make men good; an being ſo uſeful and neceſſary to ſo good a purpoſe, me ought not to be debarred of it.

Thirdly, Let it be conſidered, that the proper and na tural effects and conſequences of ignorance are equall pernicious, and much more certain and unavoidable, tha thoſe which are accidentally occaſioned by knowledge for ſo far as a man is ignorant of his duty, it is impoſ ſible he ſhould do it. He that hath the knowledge o religion, may be a bad Chriſtian; but he that is deſtitut of it can be none at all. Or if ignorance do beget an promote ſome kind of devotion in men, it is ſuch a de votion as is not properly religion, but ſuperſtition; th ignorant man may be zealouſly ſuperſtitious, but witho ſome meaſure of knowledge, no man can be truly reli gious, *That the ſoul be without knowledge it is not good* ſays Solomon, Prov. xix. 2. becauſe good practices de pend upon our knowledge, and muſt be directed by it when as a man that is trained up only to the outwar performance of ſome things in religion, as to the ſayin

over ſo many prayers in an unknown tongue, this man cannot be truly religious, becauſe nothing is religious, that is not a reaſonable ſervice; and no ſervice can be reaſonable, that is not directed by our underſtanding. Indeed, if the end of prayer were only to give GOD to underſtand what we want, it were all one what language we prayed in, and whether we underſtood what we aſked of him or not: but ſo long as the end of prayer is to teſtify the ſenſe of our own wants, and of our dependance upon GOD for the ſupply of them, it is impoſſible that any man ſhould, in any tolerable propriety of ſpeech, be ſaid to pray, who does not underſtand what he aſks; and the ſaying over ſo many *Pater noſters* by one that does not underſtand the meaning of them, is no more a prayer, than the repeating over ſo many verſes in Virgil. And if this were good reaſoning, that men muſt not be permitted to know ſo much as they can in religion, for fear they ſhould grow troubleſome with their knowledge, then certainly the beſt way in the world to maintain peace in the Chriſtian Church, would be to let the people know nothing at all in religion; and the beſt way to ſecure the ignorance of the people, would be to keep the prieſts as ignorant as the people, and then to be ſure they could teach them nothing: but then the miſchief would be, that out of a fondneſs to maintain peace in the Chriſtian Church, there would be no Church, nor no Chriſtianity; which would be the ſame wiſe contrivance, as if a prince ſhould deſtroy his ſubjects, to keep his kingdom quiet.

Fourthly, Let us likewiſe conſider, that if this reaſon be good, it is much ſtronger for with-holding the Scriptures from the prieſts, and the learned, than from the people; becauſe the danger of ſtarting errors and hereſies, and countenancing them from Scripture, and managing them plauſibly and with advantage, is much more to be feared from the learned, than from the common people; and the experience of all ages hath ſhewn, that the great broachers and abettors of hereſy in the Chriſtian Church, have been men of learning and wit; and moſt of the famous hereſies that are recorded in eccleſiaſtical

ſiaſtical hiſtory, have their names from ſome learne man or other; ſo that it is a great miſtake to think that the way to prevent error and hereſy in the Church is to take the Bible out of the hands of the people, long as the free uſe of it is permitted to men of learnin and ſkill, in whoſe hands the danger of perverting it much greater. The ancient Fathers, I am ſure, do fr quently preſcribe to the people the conſtant and carefu reading of the holy Scriptures, as the ſureſt antidote a gainſt the poiſon of dangerous errors, and damnable he reſies; and if there be ſo much danger of ſeduction in to error from the oracles of truth, by what other better means can we hope to be ſecured againſt this dan ger? If the word of GOD be ſo croſs and improper means to this end, one would think that the teaching of men ſhould be much leſs effectual; ſo that men mu either be left in their ignorance, or they muſt be pe mitted to learn from the word of truth; and whatev force this reaſon of the danger of hereſy hath in it, deprive the common people of the uſe of the Scripture I am ſure it is much ſtronger to wreſt them out of th hands of the prieſts and the learned, becauſe they a much more capable of perverting them to ſo bad purpoſe.

Fifthly, and laſtly, this danger was as great and ſible in the age of the apoſtles, as it is now; and they took a quite contrary courſe; there were herei then as well as now, and either the Scriptures were thought, by being in the hands of the people, to be t cauſe of them, or they did not think the taking of the out of their hands a proper remedy. The apoſtles in their epiſtles, do earneſtly exhort the people *to grow knowledge*, and commend them for *ſearching the Scri tures*, and charge them that *the word of* GOD *ſhould dw richly in them*. And St Peter takes particular notice ſome men wreſting ſome difficult paſſages in St Pau Epiſtles, as likewiſe in the other Scriptures, to th own deſtruction, 2 Pet. iii. 16. where ſpeaking St Paul's Epiſtles, he ſays *there are ſome things hard be underſtood, which they that are unlearned and unſt*

weſt, as they do alſo the other Scriptures, to their own deſtruction. Here the danger objected is taken notice of; but the remedy preſcribed by St Peter, is not to take from the people the uſe of the Scriptures, and to keep them in ignorance; but after he had cautioned againſt the like weakneſs and errors, he exhorts them to *grow in knowledge*, ver. 17, 18. *Ye therefore, beloved, ſeeing ye know theſe things before* (that is, ſeeing ye are ſo plainly told and warned of this danger) *beware leſt ye alſo being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs; but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour* JESUS CHRIST, (that is, of the Chriſtian religion;) believing, it ſeems, that the more knowledge they had in religion, the leſs they would be in danger of falling into damnable errors. I proceed to the

Second obſervation, *viz.* That the knowledge of our duty, and the practice of it, may and often are ſeparated. This likewiſe is ſuppoſed in the text, that men may, and often do, know the will of GOD, and their duty, and yet fail in the practice of it. Our SAVIOUR elſewhere ſuppoſeth, that many *know their maſter's will, and do not do it*; and he compares thoſe *that hear his ſayings, and do them not, to a fooliſh man that built his houſe upon the ſand.* And St James ſpeaks of ſome, *who are hearers of the word only, but not doers of it*, and for that reaſon fall ſhort of happineſs. And this is no wonder, becauſe the attaining to that knowledge of religion which is neceſſary to ſalvation is no difficult taſk. A great part of it is written in our hearts, and we cannot be ignorant of it if we would; as that there is a GOD, and a providence, and another ſtate after this life, wherein we ſhall be rewarded, or puniſhed, according as we have lived here in this world; that GOD is to be worſhipped, to be prayed to for what we want, and to be thankful for what we enjoy. Thus far nature inſtructs men in religion, and in the great duties of morality, as juſtice, and temperance, and the like. And as for revealed religion, as that JESUS CHRIST the ſon of GOD came into our nature to ſave us, by revealing our duty more

clearly

clearly and fully to us, by giving us a more perfect example of holineſs and obedience in his own life and converſation, and by dying for our ſins, and riſing again for our juſtification; theſe are things which men may eaſily underſtand; and yet for all that, they are difficultly brought to the practice of religion.

I ſhall inſtance in three ſorts of perſons, in whom the knowledge of religion is more remarkably ſeparated from the practice of it; and for diſtinction ſake, I may call them by theſe three names; the ſpeculative, the formal, and the hypocritical Chriſtian. The firſt of theſe makes religion only a ſcience, the ſecond takes it up for faſhion, the third makes ſome worldly advantage of it, and ſerves ſome ſecular intereſt and deſign by it. All theſe are upon ſeveral accounts concerned to underſtand ſomething of religion; but yet will not be brought to the practice of it.

The firſt of theſe whom I call the ſpeculative Chriſtian, is he who makes religion only a ſcience, and ſtudies it as a piece of learning, and part of that general knowledge in which he affects the reputation of being maſter; he hath no deſign to practiſe it, but he is loth to be ignorant of it, becauſe the knowledge of it is a good ornament of converſation, and will ſerve for diſcourſe and entertainment among thoſe who are diſpoſed to be grave and ſerious; and becauſe he does not intend to practiſe it, he paſſeth over thoſe things which are plain and eaſy to be underſtood, and applies himſelf chiefly to the conſideration of thoſe things which are more abſtruſe, and will afford matter of controverſy and ſubtle diſpute, as the doctrine of the Trinity, Predeſtination, Free-will, and the like. Of this temper ſeem many of the ſchool-men of old to have been, who made it their great ſtudy and buſineſs to puzzle religion and to make every thing in it intricate, by ſtarting infinite queſtions and difficulties, about the plaineſt truths; and of the ſame rank uſually are the heads and leaders of parties and factions in religion, who by needleſs controverſies, and endleſs diſputes about ſomething or other commonly of no great moment in religion, himſelf

themſelves and others from minding the practice of the great and ſubſtantial duties of a good life.

Secondly, There is the formal Chriſtian, who takes up religion for a faſhion. He is born and bred in a nation where Chriſtianity is profeſt and countenanced, and therefore thinks it convenient for him to know ſomething of it. Of this ſort there are, I fear, a great many, who read the Scriptures ſometimes as others do, to know the hiſtory of it; and go to church, and hear the goſpel preached, and by this means come in ſome meaſure to underſtand the hiſtory of our SAVIOUR, and the Chriſtian doctrine; but do not at all bend themſelves to comply with the great end and deſign of it; they do not heartily endeavour to form and faſhion their lives according to the laws and precepts of it; they think they are very good Chriſtians, if they can give an account of the articles of their faith, profeſs their belief in GOD and CHRIST, and declare that they hope to be ſaved by him, tho' they take no care to keep his commandments. Theſe are they of whom our SAVIOUR ſpeaks, Luke vi. 46. who *call him Lord, Lord, but do not the things which he ſaid.*

Thirdly, Hypocritical Chriſtians, who make an intereſt of religion, and ſerve ſome worldly deſign by it. Theſe are concerned to underſtand religion more than ordinary, that they may counterfeit it handſomely, and may not be at a loſs when they have occaſion to put on the garb of it. And this is one part of the character which the apoſtle gives of thoſe perſons, who he foretels would appear in the laſt days, 2 Tim. iii. 2. he ſays they ſhould be *lovers of their own ſelves, covetous, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleaſure more than lovers of* GOD, *having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power of it.* Now theſe men do not love religion, but they have occaſion to make uſe of it, and therefore they will have more of it than will juſt ſerve their purpoſe and deſign. And indeed he that hath any other deſign in religion than to pleaſe GOD, and ſave his ſoul, needs no more than ſo much knowledge of it, as will ſerve him to act a part in it upon occaſion. I come to the

Third and laſt obſervation, viz. That the practice religion, and the doing of what we know to be our duty is the only way to happineſs; *if ye know theſe things happy are ye if ye do them*; not *if ye know theſe things happy are ye*; but *if ye know and do them.* Now convince men of ſo important a truth, I ſhall endeavo to make out theſe two things:

Firſt, That the goſpel makes the practice of religio a neceſſary condition of our happineſs.

Secondly, That the nature and reaſon of the thi makes it a neceſſary qualification for it.

Firſt, The goſpel makes the practice of religion neceſſary condition of our happineſs. Our SAVIOUR his firſt ſermon, where he repeats the promiſe of bl ſedneſs ſo often, he makes no promiſe of it to the me knowledge of religion, but to the habit and practice Chriſtian graces and virtues, of meekneſs, and humili and mercifulneſs, and righteouſneſs, and peaceablene and purity, and patience under ſufferings and perſecu tions for righteouſneſs ſake. And Matth. vii. 2. o SAVIOUR doth moſt fully declare, that the happin which he promiſes, did not belong to thoſe who ma profeſſion of his name, and were ſo well acquainted wi his doctrine, as to be able to inſtruct others, if them ſelves in the mean time did not practiſe it: *Not every that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kin dom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my fat which is in heaven. Many will ſay unto me in that d Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name, and thy name caſt out devils, and done many wondrous work and then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you, d part from me ye workers of iniquity.* Tho' they profe to know him, yet becauſe their lives were not anſwe able to the knowledge which they had of him, and doctrine, he declares that *he will not know them*, but them *depart from him.* And then he goes on to ſhe that tho' a man attend to the doctrine of CHRIST, a gain the knowledge of it; yet if it do not deſcend i his life, and govern his actions, all that man's hopes heaven are fond and groundleſs; and only that ma

hop

opes of heaven are well grounded, who knows the ctrine of CHRIST, and does it, ver. 24. *Whoſoever areth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken m to a wiſe man, who built his houſe upon a rock, and e rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds lew, and beat upon that houſe, and it fell not, for it was unded upon a rock; and every one that heareth theſe yings of mine, and doth them not, ſhall be likened to a oliſh man, who built his houſe upon the ſand, and the in deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, nd beat upon that houſe, and it fell, and great was e fall of it.* Tho' a man had a knowledge of religion, great and perfect as that which Solomon had of na-ural things, *large as the ſand upon the ſea-ſhore*; yet all his knowledge ſeparated from practice, would be like he ſand alſo in another reſpect, a weak foundation for y man to build his hopes of happineſs upon.

To the ſame purpoſe St Paul ſpeaks, Rom. ii. 13. *ot the hearers of the law are juſt before* GOD; *but the ers of the law ſhall be juſtified.* So likewiſe St James, ap. i. 22. *Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers ly, deceiving your own ſelves*; and ver. 25. *Whoſo keth into the perfect law of liberty* (that is, the law or ctrine of the goſpel) *and continueth therein, he being t a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man all be bleſſed in his deed*; and therefore he adds, that e truth and reality of religion is to be meaſured by e effects of it, in the government of our words, and dering of our lives, ver. 26. *If any man among you m to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but de-iveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure ligion, and undefiled before* GOD *and the* FATHER *is is; to viſit the fatherleſs and widow in their affliction, d to keep himſelf unſpotted from the world.* Men talk religion, and keep a great ſtir about it; but nothing ill paſs for true religion before GOD, but the virtuous d charitable actions of a good life; and GOD will cept no man to eternal life upon any other condi-on. So the apoſtle tells us moſt expreſsly, Heb.

xii. 14. *Follow peace with all men, and holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the* LORD.

Secondly, As GOD hath made the practice of religion a neceſſary condition of our happineſs, ſo the very nature and reaſon of the thing makes it a neceſſary qualification for it. It is neceſſary that we become like to GOD, in order to the enjoyment of him; and nothing makes us like to GOD, but the practice of holineſs and goodneſs. Knowledge indeed is a divine perfection; but that alone, as it doth not render a man like GOD, ſo neither doth it diſpoſe him for the enjoyment of him. If a man had the underſtanding of an angel, he might for all that be a devil: *he that committeth ſin is of the devil*, and whatever knowledge ſuch a man may have, he is of a deviliſh temper and diſpoſition; *but every one that doth righteouſneſs is born of* GOD. By this we are like GOD, and only by our likeneſs to him, do we become capable of the ſight and enjoyment of him; therefore every man that hopes to be happy by the bleſſed ſight of GOD in the next life, muſt endeavour after holineſs in this life. So the ſame apoſtle tells us, 1 John iii. 3. *Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure.* A wicked temper and diſpoſition of mind is, in the very nature of the thing, utterly inconſiſtent with all reaſonable hopes of heaven.

Thus I have ſhewn that the practice of religion, and the doing of what we know to be our duty, is the only way to happineſs.

And now the proper inference from all this, is, to put men upon the careful practice of religion. Let no man content himſelf with the knowledge of his duty unleſs he do it; and to this purpoſe I ſhall briefly urge theſe three conſiderations.

Firſt, This is the great end of all our knowledge in religion, to practiſe what we know. The knowledge of GOD and of our duty hath ſo eſſential a reſpect to practice, that the Scripture will hardly allow it to be properly called knowledge, unleſs it have an influence upo

upon our lives, 1 John ii. 3, 4. *Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that ſaith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Secondly, Practice is the beſt way to increaſe and perfect our knowledge. Knowledge directs us in our practice, but practice confirms and increaſeth our knowledge, John vii. 17. *If any man will do the will of* GOD, *he ſhall know of the doctrine.* The beſt way to know GOD, is to be like him ourſelves, and to have the lively image of his perfections imprinted upon our ſouls; and the beſt way to underſtand the Chriſtian religion, is ſeriouſly to ſet about the practice of it; this will give a man a better notion of Chriſtianity, than any ſpeculation can.

Thirdly, Without the practice of religion, our knowledge will be ſo far from being any furtherance and advantage to our happineſs, that it will be one of the unhappieſt aggravations of our miſery. He that is ignorant of his duty, hath ſome excuſe to pretend for himſelf: but he that underſtands the Chriſtian religion, and does not live according to it, hath *no cloak for his ſin.* The defects of our knowledge, unleſs they be involuntary and wilful, will find an eaſy pardon with GOD: but the faults of our lives ſhall be ſeverely puniſhed, when we knew our duty and would not do it. I will conclude with that of our SAVIOUR, Luke xii. 47, 48. *That ſervant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes; for unto whomſoever much is given, of him much ſhall be required.* When we come into the other world, no conſideration will ſting us more, and add more to the rage of our torments than this, that we did wickedly, when we underſtood to have done better; and choſe to make ourſelves miſerable, when we knew ſo well the way to have been happy.

SERMON CXIV.

Practice in religion neceſſary, in proportion to our knowledge.

LUKE xii. 47, 48.

And that ſervant which knew his lords will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes: but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten with few ſtripes. For unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will aſk the more.

IN proſecution of the argument which I handled in my laſt diſcourſe, namely, that the knowledge of our duty, without the practice of it, will not bring us to happineſs, I ſhall proceed to ſhew, that if our practice be not anſwerable to our knowledge, this will be a great aggravation both of our ſin and puniſhment.

And to this purpoſe, I have pitched upon the words of our LORD, which are the application of two parables, which he had delivered before, to ſtir up men to a diligent and careful practice of their duty, that they may be in a continual readineſs and preparation for the coming of their LORD. The firſt parable is more general, and concerns all men, who are repreſented by ſo many ſervants in a great family, from which the lord is abſent, and they being uncertain of the time of his return, ſhould always be in a condition and poſture to receive him. Upon the hearing of this parable Peter enquires of our SAVIOUR, whether he intended this only for his diſciples, or for all? To which queſtion our SAVIOUR returns an anſwer in another

rable which more particularly concerned them; who because they were to be the chief rulers and governors of his Church, are repreſented by the ſtewards of a great family, ver. 42. *Who then is that faithful and wiſe ſteward, whom his lord ſhall make ruler over his houſhold, to give them their portion of meat in due ſeaſon?* If he diſcharge his duty, *bleſſed is he*; but if he ſhall take occaſion in his lord's abſence, to domineer over his fellow-ſervants, and riotouſly to waſte his lord's goods, his lord, when he comes, will puniſh him after a more ſevere and exemplary manner.

And then follows the application of the whole, in the words of the text, *And that ſervant which knew his lord's will and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes.* As if he had ſaid, And well may ſuch a ſervant deſerve ſo ſevere a puniſhment, who having ſuch a truſt committed to him, and knowing his lord's will ſo much better, yet does contrary to it; upon which our SAVIOUR takes occaſion to compare the fault and puniſhment of thoſe who have greater advantages and opportunities of knowing their duty, with thoſe who are ignorant of it; *That ſervant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to it, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes: but he that knew not, but did commit things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten with few ſtripes.* And then he adds the reaſon and the equity of this proceeding, *For unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will aſk the more.*

The words in general do allude to that law of the Jews, mentioned Deut. xxv. 2. where the judge is required to ſee the malefactor puniſhed according to his fault, by a certain number of ſtripes; in relation to which known law among the Jews, our SAVIOUR here ſays, that *thoſe who knew their lord's will, and did not, ſhould be beaten with many ſtripes: but thoſe who knew it not, ſhould be beaten with few ſtripes.* So that there are two obſervations lie plainly before us in the words.

Firſt,

Firſt, That the greater advantages and opportunit
any man hath of knowing his duty, if he do it not, t
greater will be his condemnation; *The ſervant whi
knew his lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, neith
did according to it, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes.*

Secondly, That ignorance is a great excuſe of me
faults, and will leſſen their puniſhment; *But he th
knew not, but did commit things worthy of ſtripes, ſha
be beaten with few ſtripes.*

I ſhall begin with the latter of theſe firſt, becauſe
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For the clearing of this, it will be requiſite to conſid
what ignorance it is which our SAVIOUR here ſpeaks of
and this is neceſſary to be enquired into, becauſe it
certain that there is ſome ſort of ignorance which do
wholly excuſe and clear from all manner of guilt; an
there is another ſort, which doth either not at all,
very little extenuate the faults of men, ſo that it mu
be a third ſort, different from both theſe, which o
SAVIOUR here means.

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cuſe and clear from all manner of guilt, and that is a
abſolute and invincible ignorance, when a perſon
wholly ignorant of the thing, which if he knew, h
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helpt it, that he is ignorant of it; that is, he eith
had not the capacity, or wanted the means and oppo
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know to be his duty. For GOD meaſures the faults o
men by their wills, and if there be no defect ther
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is conſcious to himſelf that he would not do what h
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ought not to do. Now if a man be ſimply and invinc
bly ignorant of his duty, his neglect of it is altogeth
involuntary; for the will hath nothing to do, where th
underſtandi

derſtanding doth not firſt direct. And this is the e of children who are not yet come to the uſe of ſon; for tho' they may do that which is materially a lt, yet it is none in them, becauſe, by reaſon of their apacity, they are at preſent invincibly ignorant of at they ought to do. And this is the caſe likewiſe of ots, who are under a natural incapacity of knowledge, ſo far as they are ſo, nothing that they do is im- ed to them as a fault. The ſame may be ſaid of racted perſons, who are deprived either wholly, or at e times, of the uſe of their underſtandings: ſo far, ſo long as they are thus deprived, they are free from guilt; and to perſons who have the free and perfect of their reaſon, no neglect of any duty is imputed, which they are abſolutely and invincibly ignorant. inſtance, it is a duty incumbent upon all mankind, believe in the Son of GOD, where he is ſufficiently nifeſted and revealed to them; but thoſe who never rd of him, nor had any opportunity of coming to the wledge of him, ſhall not be condemned for this infi- ty, becauſe it is impoſſible they ſhould believe on , of whom they never heard; they may indeed be demned upon other accounts, for ſinning againſt the t of nature, and for not obeying the law which was tten in their hearts; for what the apoſtle ſays of the lation of the law, is as true of any other revelation GOD, *As many as have ſinned without law; ſhall periſh without law; and as many as have ſinned r the law, ſhall be judged by the law,* Rom. ii. 12. like manner, thoſe who have ſinned without the el, (that is, who never had the knowledge of it) not be condemned for any offence againſt that re- tion which was never made to them, but for their ation of the law of nature; only they that have ed under the goſpel, ſhall be judged by it.

econdly, There is likewiſe another ſort of ignorance, h either does not at all, or very little, extenuate the s of men, when men are not only ignorant, but e to be ſo; that is, when they wilfully neglect e means and opportunities of knowledge which are afforded

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afforded to them; ſuch as Job ſpeaks of, Job xxi. *Who ſay unto* GOD *depart from us, for we deſire not knowledge of thy ways.* And this ſort of ignorance among the Jews were guilty of, when our SAVIOUR came and preached to them, but they would not be inſtructed by him; *The light came among them, but they loved darkneſs rather than light*, as he himſelf ſays of them; and as he ſays elſewhere of the Phariſees, *they rejected the counſel of* GOD *againſt themſelves*, they wilfully ſhut their eyes againſt that light which offered itſelf to them; *They would not ſee with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor underſtand with their hearts, that they might be converted, and healed.* Now an ignorance in this degree wilful, can hardly be imagined to carry any excuſe at all in it. He that knew not his lord's will, becauſe he would not know it, becauſe he wilfully rejected the means of coming to the knowledge of it, deſerves to be beaten with as many ſtripes, as if he had known it; becauſe he might have known it, if he would not. He that will not take notice of the king's proclamation, or will ſtop his ears when it is read, and afterwards offends againſt it, does equally deſerve puniſhment with thoſe who have read it, and heard it, and diſobey it; becauſe he was as groſsly faulty in not knowing it; and there is no reaſon that any man's groſs ignorance ſhould be his excuſe.

So that it is neither of theſe ſorts of ignorance that our SAVIOUR means, neither abſolute and invincible ignorance, nor that which is groſsly wilful and affected; for the firſt, men deſerve not to be beaten at all, becauſe they cannot help it; for the latter, they deſerve not to be excuſed, becauſe they might have helped their ignorance, and would not.

But our SAVIOUR here ſpeaks of ſuch an ignorance as does in a good degree extenuate the fault, and yet not wholly excuſe it; for he ſays of them, that *they knew not their lord's will*, and yet that this ignorance did not wholly excuſe them from blame, nor exempt them from all puniſhment, *but they ſhould be beaten with few ſtripes.* In the

Third place then, there is an ignorance which is in degree faulty, and yet does in a great measure excuse the faults which proceed from it; and this is when are not absolutely ignorant of their duty, but only mparison of others, who have a far more clear and ect knowledge of it; and tho' they do not grosly wilfully neglect the means of further knowledge, perhaps they do not make the best use they might e opportunities they have of knowing their duty r; and therefore in comparison of others, who have tter means and advantages of knowing their LORD's they may be said not to know it, tho' they are not y ignorant of it, but only have a more obscure and rtain knowledge of it. Now this ignorance does in at measure excuse such persons, and extenuate their s, in comparison of those who had a clearer and perfect knowledge of their master's will; and yet it not free them from all guilt; because they did not live o that degree of knowledge which they had; and ps if they had used more care and industry, they t have known their LORD's will better. And this he case of the heathen, who in comparison of those enjoyed the light of the gospel, might be said not ve known their LORD's will, tho' as to many of their duty, they had some directions from natught, and their consciences did urge them to many s by the obscure apprehensions and hopes of a future d, and the fear of a future punishment. But this but a very obscure and uncertain knowledge, in arison of the clear light of the gospel, which hath ered to us our duty so plainly by the laws and pre- of it, and hath presented us with such powerful es and arguments to obedience in the promises and nings of it. And this likewise is the case of many tians; who either through their natural slowness of understandings, or by the neglect of their parents achers, or other circumstances of their education, had far less means and advantages of knowledge than . GOD does not expect so much from those, as others, to whom he hath given greater capacity,

and

and advantages of knowledge; and when our L
ſhall come to call his ſervants to an account, they
be beaten with fewer ſtripes than others; they ſha
wholly eſcape, becauſe they were not wholly ignor
but by how much they had leſs knowledge than o
by ſo much their puniſhment ſhall be lighter.

And there is all the equity in the world it ſhou
ſo, that men ſhould be accountable according to
they have received, and that to whom leſs is given,
ſhould be required at their hands. The Scripture
told us, that GOD *will judge the world in righteou*
now juſtice does require, that in taxing the puni
of offenders, every thing ſhould be conſider'd, tha
be a juſt excuſe and extenuation of their crimes, an
accordingly their puniſhment ſhould be abated. No
greateſt extenuation of any fault is ignorance,
when it proceeds from no fault of ours, no fau
proceed from it; ſo that ſo far as any man is inno
ignorant of his duty, ſo far he is excuſable for th
glect of it: for every degree of ignorance takes
much from the perverſeneſs of the will; *& nihil*
in inferno, niſi propria voluntas, "Nothing is puni
"hell, but what is voluntary, and proceeds from
"wills."

I do not intend this diſcourſe for any commen
of ignorance, or encouragement to it. For know
hath many advantages above it, and is much mo
firable, if we uſe it well; and if we do not, it
own fault; if we be not wanting to ourſelves, w
be much happier by our knowledge, than any m
be by his ignorance; for tho' ignorance may pl
excuſe, yet it can hope for no reward; and it is
better to need no excuſe, than to have the beſt
world ready at hand to plead for ourſelves.
that, we may do well to conſider, that ignoranc
where an excuſe where it is cheriſhed; ſo that it
be the vaineſt thing in the world for any man to
it, in hopes thereby to excuſe himſelf; for wh
wilful and choſen, it is a fault, and (as I ſaid be
is the moſt unreaſonable thing in the world,

an's fault ſhould prove his excuſe. So that this can no encouragement to ignorance, to ſay that it extenuates the faults of men: for it does not extenuate ern, whenever it is wilful and affected; and whenever it is deſigned and choſen, it is wilful; and then no an can reaſonably deſign to continue ignorant, that he y have an excuſe for his faults, becauſe then the ignance is wilful, and whenever it is ſo, it ceaſeth to an excuſe.

the rather ſpeak this, becauſe ignorance hath had good fortune to meet with great patrons in the ld, and to be extolled, tho' not upon this account, upon another, for which there is leſs pretence of on; as if it were the mother of devotion. Of ſuition I grant it is, and of this we ſee plentiful proof, ng thoſe who are ſo careful to preſerve and cheriſh but that true piety and devotion ſhould ſpring from s as unlikely, as that darkneſs ſhould produce light. hope indeed, and charitably believe, that the ignoe in which ſome are detained by their teachers and rnors, will be a real excuſe, to as many of them as otherwiſe honeſt and ſincere; but I doubt not, but errors and faults which proceed from this ignoe, will lie heavy upon thoſe who keep them in it.

oceed to the

econd obſervation, That the greater advantages and rtunities any man hath of knowing the will of , and his duty, the greater will be his condemnaif he do not do it. *The ſervant which knew his will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes. Which knew his will, and prepared not himſelf*; the preparation of ind to do the will of GOD, whenever there is oc- and opportunity for it, is accepted with him; a ightly diſpoſed to obey GOD, tho' it be not ght into act, for want of opportunity, does not it's reward: but when, notwithſtanding we know LORD's will, there are neither of theſe, neither , nor the preparation and reſolution of doing it, punishment may we not expect?

The juſt GOD, in puniſhing the ſins of men, proportions the puniſhment to the crime, and where crime is greater, the puniſhment riſeth; as amongſt Jews, where the crime was ſmall, the malefactor ſentenced to *a few ſtripes*; where it was great, he *beaten with many*. Thus our SAVIOUR repreſents great judge of the world dealing with ſinners; acc ing as their ſins are aggravated, he will add to their niſhment. Now after all the aggravations of ſin, t is none that doth more intrinſically heighten the m nity of it, than when it is committed againſt the knowledge of our duty, and that upon theſe accounts.

Firſt, Becauſe the knowledge of GOD's will great an advantage to the doing of it.

Secondly, Becauſe it is a great obligation upon the doing of it.

Thirdly, Becauſe the neglect of our duty in this cannot be without a great deal of wilfulneſs and conte I ſhall ſpeak briefly to theſe three.

Firſt, Becauſe the knowledge of GOD's will great an advantage to the doing of it; and every ad tage of doing our duty, is a certain aggravation of neglect of it. And this is the reaſon which our VIOUR adds here in the text, *For to whomſoever is given, of them much will be required*; *and to men have committed much, of him they will aſk the* It was, no doubt, a great diſcouragement and vantage to the heathen, that they were ſo doubtful cerning the will of GOD, and in many caſes left to uncertainty of their own reaſon, by what way and they might beſt apply themſelves to the pleaſing of and this diſcouraged ſeveral of the wiſeſt of them all ſerious endeavours in religion, thinking it as to do nothing, as to be miſtaken about it. Others were more naturally devout, and could not ſatisfy conſciences without ſome expreſſions of religion, into various ſuperſtitions, and were ready to embrace way of worſhip which cuſtom preſcribed, or the fa of men could ſuggeſt to them; and hence ſprang all

stupid and barbarous idolatries of the heathen. For ignorance growing upon the world, that natural propension which was in the minds of men to religion, and the worſhip of a deity, for want of certain direction, expreſſed itſelf in thoſe fooliſh and abominable idolatries, which were practiſed among the heathen.

And is it not then a mighty advantage to us, that we have the clear and certain direction of divine revelation? We have the will of GOD plainly diſcovered to us, and all the parts of our duty clearly defined and determined, ſo that no man that is in any meaſure free from intereſt and prejudice, can eaſily miſtake in any great and material part of his duty. We have the nature of GOD plainly revealed to us, and ſuch a character of him given, as is moſt ſuitable to our natural conceptions of a deity, as render him both awful and amiable; for the ſcripture repreſents him to us as great and good, powerful and merciful, a perfect hater of ſin, and a great lover of mankind; and we have the law and manner of his worſhip (ſo far as was needful) and the rules of a good life, clearly expreſſed and laid down; and as a powerful motive and argument to the obedience of thoſe laws, a plain diſcovery made to us of the endleſs rewards and puniſhments of another world. And is not this a mighty advantage to the doing of GOD's will to have it ſo plainly declared to us, and ſo powerfully enforced upon us; ſo that our duty lies plainly before us; we ſee what we have to do, and the danger of neglecting it; ſo that conſidering the advantage we have of doing GOD's will, by our clear knowledge of it, we are altogether inexcuſable if we do it not.

Secondly, The knowledge of our LORD's will is likewiſe a great obligation upon us to the doing of it. For that ought in reaſon to oblige us more to do any thing, when we can to be fully aſſured that it is the will of GOD, and that it is the law of the great ſovereign of the world, who is able to ſave, or to deſtroy? That it is the pleaſure of him that made us, and who hath declared that he deſigns to make us happy, by our obedience to his laws? and that if we know theſe things to be the will of GOD,

we have the greateſt obligation to do them, whether w
conſider the authority of GOD, or our own intereſt; a
if we neglect them, we have nothing to ſay in our ow
excuſe. We knew the law, and the advantage of kee
ing it, and the penalty of breaking it, and if after th
we will tranſgreſs, there is no apology to be made f
us. They have ſomething to plead for themſelves, w
can ſay, that tho' they had ſome apprehenſion of ſo
parts of their duty, and their minds were apt to dict
to them that they ought to do ſome things, yet the di
ferent apprehenſions of mankind about ſeveral of the
things, and the doubts and uncertainties of their ow
minds concerning them, made them eaſy to be carri
off from their duty, by the vicious inclinations of the
own nature, and the tyranny of cuſtom and exampl
and the pleaſant temptations of fleſh and blood; b
had they had a clear and undoubted revelation fr
GOD, and had certainly known theſe things to be h
will, this would have conquered and borne down all o
jections and temptations to the contrary; or, if it h
not, would have ſtopped their mouths, and taken aw
all excuſe from them. There is ſome colour in this pl
that in many caſes they did not know certainly what t
will of GOD was, but for us who own a clear revelat
from GOD, and profeſs to believe it, what can we f
for ourſelves, to mitigate the ſeverity of GOD towar
us; why he ſhould not pour forth all his wrath, a
execute upon us the fierceneſs of his anger?

Thirdly, The neglect of GOD's will when we kn
it, cannot be without a great deal of wilfulneſs and co
tempt. If we know it, and do it not, the fault is ſol
in our wills, and the more wilful any ſin is, the mo
heinouſly wicked is it. There can hardly be a great
aggravation of a crime, than if it proceed from meer o
ſtinacy and perverſeneſs; and if we know it to be o
LORD's will, and do it not, we are guilty of th
higheſt contempt of the greateſt authority in the worl
And do we think this to be but a ſmall aggravation,
affront the great ſovereign and judge of the world? n
only to break his laws, but to trample upon them a
deſpi

despise them, when we know whose laws they are? *Will we provoke the* LORD *to jealousy? are we stronger than he?* We believe that it is GOD who said, *Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; thou shalt not hate, or oppress, or defraud thy brother in any thing; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*; and will we notwithstanding venture to break these laws, knowing whose authority they are stamp'd withal? After this contempt of him, what favour can we hope for from him? What can we say for ourselves, why any one of those many stripes which are threatned should be abated us? *Ignosci aliquatenus ignorantiæ potest; contemptus veniam non habet*; "something may be pardoned to ignorance; but contempt can expect no forgiveness." He that strikes his prince, not knowing him to be so, hath something to say for himself, that though he did a disloyal act, yet it did not proceed from a disloyal mind but he that first acknowledgeth him for his prince, and then affronts him, deserves to be prosecuted with the utmost severity, because he did it wilfully, and in meer contempt. The knowledge of our duty, and that it is the will of GOD which we go against, takes away all possible excuse from us; for no thing can be said, why we should offend him who hath such authority to command us, and power to destroy us.

And thus I have, as briefly as I could, represented to you the true ground and reason of the aggravation of those sins, which are committed against the clear knowledge of GOD's will, and our duty; because this knowledge is so great an advantage to the doing of our duty: so great an obligation upon us to it; and because the neglect of our LORD's will in this case, cannot be without great wilfulness, and a downright contempt of his authority.

And shall I now need to tell you, how much it concerns every one of us, to live up to that knowledge which we have of our LORD's will, and to prepare ourselves to do according to it; to be always in a

readineſs and diſpoſition to do what we know to be his will, and actually to do it, when there is occaſion and opportunity? And it concerns us the more, becauſe we, in this age and nation, have ſo many advantages above a great part of the world, of coming to the knowledge of our duty. We enjoy the cleareſt and moſt perfect revelation which GOD ever made of his will to mankind, and have the light of divine truth plentifully ſhed amongſt us, by the free uſe of the holy Scripture, which is not a ſealed book to us, but lies open to be read, and ſtudied by us; this ſpiritual food is *rained down* like manna *round about our tents*, and every one may gather ſo much as is ſufficient; we are not ſtinted, nor have the word of GOD given out to us in broken pieces, or mixed and adulterated, here a leſſon of Scripture, and there a legend; but whole and entire, fincere and uncorrupt.

GOD has not left us, as he did the heathen for many ages, to the imperfect and uncertain direction of natural light; nor hath he revealed his will to us, as he did to the Jews, in dark types and ſhadows: but hath made a clear diſcovery of his mind and will to us. The diſpenſation which we are under, hath no vail upon it, *the darkneſs is paſt, and the true light now ſhineth*, *we are of the day, and of the light*, and therefore it may juſtly be expected, that we ſhould *put off the works of darkneſs, and walk as children of the light*. Every degree of knowledge which we have, is an aggravation of the ſins committed againſt it, and when our LORD comes to paſs ſentence upon us, will add to the number of our ſtripes. Nay, if GOD ſhould inflict no poſitive torments upon ſinners; yet their own minds would deal moſt ſeverely with them upon this account, and nothing would gall their conſciences more, than to remember against what light they did offend. For herein lies the very nature and ſting of all guilt, to be conſcious to ourſelves *that we knew what we ought to have done, and did not*. The vices and corruptions which reigned in the world before, will be pardonable, in compariſon of our's. *The times of that ignorance* GOD *winked at; but now*

ow to be … *commands all men every where to repent.* Mankind occaſion … ſome excuſe for their errors before, and GOD was ore, bec… eaſed in a great meaſure to overlook them; but *if we* advanta… *tinue ſtill in our ſins, we have no cloak for them.* All o the kno… degrees of light which we enjoy, are ſo many ta- nd moſt … nts committed to us by our LORD, for the improving his will … hereof, he will call us to a ſtrict account; *for unto* h plentifu… *om ſoever much is given, of him much ſhall be required;* y Scriptur… *to whom he hath committed much, of him he will aſk* s open to … *more.* And nothing is more reaſonable, than that od is *rai*… n ſhould account for all the advantages and opportu- nd every … ities they have had of knowing the will of GOD; and e not ſtint… at as their knowledge was increaſed, ſo their ſorrow s in brok… d puniſhment ſhould proportionably riſe, if they ſin a- ſon of Scr… inſt it. The ignorance of a great part of the world is ntire, finc… ervedly pitied and lamented by us, but the condem- … tion of none is ſo ſad, as of thoſe who having the heathen … nowledge of GOD's will, neglected to do it; *how much* n direction … *er had it been for them not to have known the way of* ill to us, … *hteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn* hadows: … *m the holy commandment delivered unto them!* If we d will to … d been born, and brought up in ignorance of the true no vail … od and his will, *we had had no ſin,* in compariſon of *now ſhin*… at now we have: *but now that we ſee, our ſin re-* refore it r… *ains.* This will aggravate our condemnation beyond *the work*… eaſure, that we had the knowledge of ſalvation ſo . Every … arly revealed to us. Our duty lies plainly before us, ggravation … know what we ought to do, and *what manner of* LORD co… *ſons we ought to be, in all holy converſation and god-* umber of … *ſs.* We believe the coming of our LORD to judg- ſitive torm… nt, and we know not how ſoon he may be *revealed* deal moſt … *n heaven with his mighty angels,* not *only to take ven-* l nothing … *nce on them that know not* GOD, but on them that ember agai… e known him, and yet *obey not the goſpel of his ſon.* s the very … d if all this will not move us to prepare ourſelves to to ourſelv… our LORD's will, we deſerve to have our ſtripes mul- *ne, and di*… ed. No condemnation can be too heavy for thoſe reigned in … o offend againſt the clear knowledge of GOD's will, ariſon of ou… their duty.

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Let us then be perſuaded to ſet upon the practice of what we know; let the light which is in our underſtandings, deſcend upon our hearts and lives; let us not dare to continue any longer in the practice of any known ſin, nor in the neglect of any thing which we are convinced is our duty, and *if our hearts condemn us not*, neither for the neglect of the means of knowledge, nor for rebelling againſt the light of GOD's truth ſhining in our minds, and glaring upon our conſciences, *then have we confidence towards* GOD: *but if our hearts condemn us,* GOD *is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.*

SERMON CXV.

The ſins of men not chargeable upon GOD, but upon themſelves.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

JAMES i. 13, 14.

Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for GOD *cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed.*

NEXT to the belief of a GOD, and his providence, there is nothing more fundamental and neceſſary to the practice of a good life, than the belief of theſe two principles, *That* GOD *is not the author of ſin,* and *that every man's ſin lies at his own door, and he hath reaſon to blame himſelf for all the evil that he does.*

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First, that GOD *is not the author of ſin*, that he is no way acceſſary to our faults, either by tempting or forcing us to the commiſſion of them. For if he were, they would neither properly be ſins, nor could they be juſtly puniſhed. They would not properly be ſins, for that is a contradiction to the will of GOD; but ſuppoſing men to be either tempted or neceſſitated thereto, that which we call ſin, would either be a meer paſſive obedience to the will of GOD, or an active compliance with it, but neither way a contradiction to it. Nor could thoſe actions be juſtly puniſhed; for all puniſhment ſuppoſeth a fault, and a fault ſuppoſeth liberty and freedom from force and neceſſity; ſo that no man can be juſtly puniſhed for that which he cannot help, and no man can help that, which he is neceſſitated and compell'd to. And tho' there were no force in the caſe, but only temptation, yet it would be unreaſonable for the ſame perſon to tempt and puniſh. For as nothing is more contrary to the holineſs of GOD, than to tempt men to ſin; ſo nothing can be more againſt juſtice and goodneſs, than firſt to draw men into a fault, and then to chaſtize them for it. So that this is a principle which lies at the bottom of all religion, *That* GOD *is not the author of the ſins of men.* And then,

Secondly, *That every man's fault lies at his own door, and he has reaſon enough to blame himſelf for all the evil that he does.* And this is that which makes men properly guilty, that when they have done amiſs, they are conſcious to themſelves it was their own act, and they might have done otherwiſe; and guilt is that which makes men liable to puniſhment; and fear of puniſhment is the great reſtraint from ſin, and one of the principle arguments for virtue and obedience.

And both theſe principles our apoſtle St James does more fully aſſert in the words which I have read unto you. *Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD; *for* GOD *cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed.*

In which words theſe two things are plainly contained.

First,

Firſt, That GOD doth not tempt any man to ſin. *Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD: *for* GOD *cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*

Secondly, That every man's fault lies at his own door, and he is his own greateſt tempter. *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed.*

I. That GOD doth not tempt any man to ſin. *Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD: *for* GOD *cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth any man.* In which words there are three things to be conſidered.

Firſt, The propoſition which the apoſtle here rejects, and that is, *That* GOD *tempts men. Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD.

Secondly, The manner in which he rejects it. *Let no man ſay ſo.* By which manner of ſpeaking, the apoſtle inſinuates theſe two things. 1. That men are apt to lay their faults upon GOD: For when he ſays, *Let no man ſay ſo,* he intimates, that men are apt to ſay ſo; and 2dly, That it is not only a fault, but an impious aſſertion to ſay that GOD tempts men. He ſpeaks of it as a thing to be rejected with deteſtation. *Let no man ſay ſo,* that is, far be it from us to affirm a thing ſo impious and diſhonourable to GOD.

Thirdly, The reaſon and argument that he brings againſt it, *For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*

Firſt, The propoſition which the apoſtle here rejects, and that is, *That* GOD *tempts men: Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD. Now that we may the more diſtinctly underſtand the meaning of the propoſition, which the apoſtle here rejects, it will be very requiſite to conſider what temptation is, and the ſeveral ſorts and kinds of it. To tempt a man, is in general, nothing elſe but to make trial of him in any kind what he will do. In ſcripture, temptation is commonly confin'd to the trial of a man's good or bad,

his virtuous or vicious inclinations. But then it is ſuch trial as endangers a man's virtue, and if he be not ell reſolved, is likely to overcome it, and to make him ll into ſin. So that temptatation does always imply mething of danger the worſt way. And men are thus mpted, either from themſelves, or by others; by hers chiefly theſe two ways.

Firſt, By direct and downright perſwaſions to ſin.

Secondly, By being brought into ſuch circumſtances will greatly endanger their falling into it, tho' none licit and perſwade them to it.

Firſt, By direct and downright perſwaſions to ſin. hus the devil tempted our firſt parents, by repreſent- things ſo to them, as might on the one hand incite m to ſin, and on the other hand, weaken and looſen t, which was the great curb and reſtraint from it. the one hand he repreſents to them the advantages y ſhould have by breaking GOD's command. GOD *know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes ll be opened, and ye ſhall be as gods, knowing good d evil.* On the other hand, he repreſents the danger offending not to be ſo great and certain as they gined. *The ſerpent ſaid unto the woman, ye ſhall not ely die.* And the devil had ſo good ſucceſs in this y of tempting the firſt Adam, as to encourage him to upon the ſecond, our bleſſed SAVIOUR, in the ſame nner; for he would have perſwaded him *to fall down d worſhip him,* by offering him *all the kingdoms of the rld, and the glory of them.* And thus bad men many es tempt others, and endeavour to draw them into ſame wicked courſes with themſelves. Solomon re- ents to us the manner and the danger of it, Prov. i. 11, 13, 14. *My ſon, if ſinners intice thee, con- thou not; if they ſay, come with us, let us lay wait blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without ſe; we ſhall find all precious ſubſtance, we ſhall fill bouſes with ſpoil. Caſt in thy lot amongſt us, let us have one purſe.* This is the firſt way of temptation.

And to be ſure GOD tempts no man this way. He es no arguments to man to perſwade him to ſin; he

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no where propoſes either reward or impunity to ſinners, but, on the contrary, gives all imaginable encouragement to obedience, and threatens the tranſgreſſion of his with moſt dreadful puniſhments.

Secondly, Men are likewiſe tempted, by being brou into ſuch circumſtances, as will greatly endanger t falling into ſin, tho' none perſuade them to it; and happens two ways; when men are remarkably beſet w the allurements of the world, or aſſaulted with the and calamities of it; for either of theſe conditions great temptations to men, and make powerful aſſa upon them, eſpecially when they fall upon thoſe are ill diſpoſed before, or are but of a weak virtue reſolution.

The allurements of the world are ſtrong temptatio riches, and honours, and pleaſures, they are the o ſions and incentives to many luſts. Honour and gr neſs, power and authority over others, eſpecially men are ſuddenly lifted up, and from a low condit are apt to tranſport men to pride and inſolency tow others. Power is a ſtrong liquor which does eaſily toxicate weak minds, and make them apt to ſay and undecent things. *Man that is in honour and underſt not, is like the beaſts that periſh*; intimating that who are exalted to an high condition, are very ap forget themſelves, and to play the fools and beaſts. requires great conſideration, and a well poiſed mind, to be lifted up with one's condition. Weak heads apt to turn and grow dizzy, when they look down a great height.

And ſo likewiſe eaſe and proſperity are a very ſlip condition to moſt men, and without great care, do danger the falling into great ſins. So Solomon obſer Prov. i. 32. *For the turning away of the ſimple ſhall them, and the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them.* this reaſon Agur maketh his prayer to GOD, tha would *give him neither poverty nor riches*, but keep in a mean condition, becauſe of the danger of both treams, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. *Give me not riches, leſt full, and deny thee.* Both the eager deſire and the

ſeſſion and enjoyment of riches do frequently prove fatal to men. So our SAVIOUR tells us elſewhere very emphatically, Mat. xix. 23, 24. *Verily I ſay unto you, that a rich man ſhall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven: And again I ſay unto you, it is eaſier for a camel to go throgh the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of* GOD. St Paul likewiſe very fully declares unto us the great danger of this condition, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. *But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while ſome coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themſelves through with many ſorrows.*

But the greateſt bait of all to fleſh and blood, is ſenſual pleaſures; the very preſence and opportunity of theſe, are apt to kindle the deſires, and to enflame the paſſions of men, eſpecially where theſe temptations meet with ſuitable tempers, where every ſpark that falls upon tinder-wood.

And on the other hand, the evils and calamities of this world, eſpecially if they threaten or fall upon men in any degree of extremity, are ſtrong temptations to human nature. Poverty and want, pain and ſuffering, and the fear of any great evil, eſpecially of death, theſe are great ſtraits to human nature, and apt to tempt men to great ſins, to impatience and diſcontent, to unjuſt and diſhoneſt ſhifts, to the forſaking of God, and apoſtacy from his truth and religion. Agur was ſenſible of the dangerous temptation of poverty, and therefore he prays againſt that, as well as againſt riches; *give me not poverty, leſt being poor I ſteal, and take the name of the* GOD *my* GOD *in vain*; that is, leſt I be tempted to theft, and perjury. The devil whoſe trade it is to tempt men to ſin, knew very well the force of theſe kinds of temptations, when he deſires GOD firſt to touch Job in his eſtate, and to ſee what effect that would have, Job i. 11. *But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curſe thee to thy face.* And when he found himſelf deceived in this, ſurely he

thought, that were he but afflicted with great bodily pains, that would put him out of all patience, and flesh and blood would not be able to withstand this temptation. Chap. ii. 5. *But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.* And this was the great temptation that the primitive Christians were assaulted withal; they were tempted to forsake CHRIST and his religion, by the most violent persecution, by the spoiling of their goods, by imprisonment, and torture, and death. And this is that kind of temptation which the apostle particularly speaks of before the text, *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the* LORD *hath promised to them that love him*; and then it follows, *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD. And thus I have given an account of the several sorts of temptations comprehended under this second head, namely, when men are tempted by being brought into such circumstances as do greatly endanger their falling into sin by the allurements of this world, and by the evils and calamities of it.

Now the question is, how far GOD hath an hand in these kind of temptations, that so we may know how to limit this proposition, which the apostle here rejects, *that men are tempted of* GOD, *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD.

That the providence of GOD does order, or at least permit men to be brought into these circumstances I have spoken of, which are such dangerous temptations to sin, no man can doubt, that believes his providence to be concern'd in the affairs of the world. All the difficulty is, how far the apostle does here intend to extempt GOD from an hand in these temptations. Now for the clearer understanding of this, it will be requisite to consider the several ends and reasons, which those who tempt or others may have in tempting them; and all temptation is for one of these three ends or reasons; either for the trial and improvement of men's virtues; or by way of judgment and punishment for some former great sins or provocati-

provocations; or with a direct purpoſe and deſign to ſeduce men to ſin; theſe I think are the chief ends and reaſons that can be imagined, of exerciſing men with dangerous temptations.

Firſt, for the exerciſe and improvement of men's graces and virtues. And this is the end which GOD always aims at, in bringing good men, or permitting them to be brought into dangerous temptations. And therefore St James ſpeaks of it as a matter of joy, when good men are exerciſed with afflictions; not becauſe afflictions are deſirable for themſelves, but becauſe of the happy conſequences of them, ver. 2, 3. of this chapter, *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.* And to the ſame purpoſe St Paul, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. *We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience*; δοκιμὴν patience trieth a man, and *his trial worketh hope, and hope maketh not aſhamed.* Theſe are happy effects and conſequences of affliction and ſuffering, when they improve the virtues of men and increaſe their graces, and thereby make way for the increaſe of their glory. Upon this account, St James pronounceth thoſe bleſſed, who are thus tempted. *Bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he ſhall receive the crown of life, which the* LORD *hath promiſed to them that love him.*

And this certainly is no diſparagement to the providence of GOD, to permit men to be thus tempted, when he permits it for no other end, but to make them better men, and thereby to prepare them for a greater reward: And ſo the apoſtle aſſures us, Rom. viii. 17, 18. *If ſo be we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo be glorified with him; for I reckon that the ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed in us.* And ver. 28. *For we know that all things ſhall work together for good to them that love God.* And this happy end and iſſue of temptations to good men the providence of GOD ſecures to them (if they be not wanting to themſelves) one of theſe two

ways, either by proportioning the temptation to their ſtrength; or if it exceed that, by miniſtring new ſtrength and ſupport to them, by the ſecret and extraordinary aid of his HOLY SPIRIT.

Firſt, By proportioning the temptation to their ſtrength; ordering things ſo by his ſecret and wiſe providence, that they ſhall not be aſſaulted by any temptation, which is beyond their ſtrength to reſiſt and overcome. And herein the ſecurity of good men doth ordinarily conſiſt; and the very beſt of us, thoſe who have the firmeſt and moſt reſolute virtue were in infinite danger, if the providence of GOD did not take the care of us. For a temptation may ſet upon the best men with ſo much violence, or ſurprize them at ſuch an advantage, as no ordinary degree of grace and virtue is able to withſtand: But where men are ſincerely good and honeſtly reſolv'd, the providence of GOD doth ward off theſe fierce blows, and put by theſe violent thruſts, and by a ſecret diſpoſal of things, keep them from being aſſaulted by theſe irreſiſtible kinds of temptations.

The conſideration whereof, as it is a great encouragement to men to be ſincerely good, ſo likewiſe a great argument for a continual dependance upon the providence of GOD, and to take us off from confidence in ourſelves, and our own ſtrength. And this uſe the apoſtle makes of it, 1 Cor. x. 12. *Wherefore let him that thinketh he ſtandeth*, (that is confident that nothing ſhall be able to ſhake him, or throw him down) *take heed leſt he fall*; *there hath no temptation taken you but ſuch as is common to men*; εἰ μὴ ἀνθρώπινος, *what is human*; nothing but what an human ſtrength aſſiſted by an ordinary grace of GOD, may be able to reſiſt and conquer. But there are greater and more violent temptations than theſe, which you have not yet been tried with; and when thoſe happen, we muſt have recourſe to GOD for an extraordinary aſſiſtance. And this is the

Second way I mentioned, whereby the providence of GOD does ſecure good men in caſe of extraordinary temptation

temptations, which no human ſtrength can probably reſiſt. And this the ſame apoſtle aſſures us of in the very next words, GOD *is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that you may be able to bear it.* That is, in caſe of great and violent temptations (ſuch as the Chriſtians in the height of their perſecutions were expoſed to) GOD will ſecretly miniſter ſtrength and ſupport equal to the force and power of the temptation. And this GOD did in an extraordinary manner to the Chriſtian martyrs, and that to ſuch a degree, as made them joyfully to embrace their ſufferings, and with the greateſt chearfulneſs in the world to endure thoſe torments, which no human patience was able to bear. And where GOD doth thus ſecure men againſt temptations, or ſupport them under them, it is no reflection at all upon the goodneſs or juſtice of his providence, to permit them to be thus tempted.

Secondly, God permits others to be thus tempted, by way of judgment and puniſhment for ſome former great ſins and provocations which they have been guilty of. And thus many times GOD puniſheth great and notorious offenders, by permitting them to fall into great temptations, which meeting with a vicious diſpoſition, are likely to be too hard for them, eſpecially conſidering how by a long habit of wickedneſs, and wilful commiſſion of great and notorious ſins, they have made themſelves an eaſy prey to every temptation, and have driven the SPIRIT of GOD from them, and deprived themſelves of thoſe aids and reſtraints of his grace, which he ordinarily affords, not only to good men, but likewiſe thoſe who are not very bad. And thus GOD is ſaid to have hardened Pharaoh by thoſe plagues and judgments which he ſent upon him and his kingdom. But if we carefully read the ſtory, it is ſaid that *he firſt hardened himſelf*, and then that GOD *hardened him*; that is, he being hardened under the firſt judgments of GOD, and ſo ſent more, which meeting with his obſtinacy, had an unnatural effect upon him, to harden him yet more; not that GOD did infuſe any wickedneſs or obſtinacy

into him, but by his just judgments sent more plagues upon him, which hardened him yet more, and which were likely to have that effect upon him, considering the ill temper of the man. And it was just by way of punishment that they should. And so likewise, Josh. xi. 19, 20. It is said that the cities of the Canaanites did not make peace with Joshua, because *it was of the* LORD *to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly*; that is, for their former iniquities, the measure whereof was now full, the providence of GOD did justly bring them into, and leave them under those circumstances which made them obstinate against all terms of peace, and this proved fatal to them.

And in the like sense we are to understand several other expressions in Scripture, which likewise might seem very harsh. As Isaiah vi. 10. *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed*; all which expressions signify no more, but that GOD, for the former provocations and impenitency of that people, did leave them to their own hardness and blindness, so that they did not desire to understand snd make use of the means of their recovery. So likewise, Rom. i. 24. GOD is said to have given up the idolatrous Heathen *to uncleanness, to vile and unnatural lusts*; and ver. 28. *to a reprobate and injudicious mind*; that is as a punishment of their idolatry, he left them to the power of those temptations, which betrayed them to the vilest lusts. And to mention but one text more, 2 Thes. ii. 11. The apostle threatens those that rejected the truth, that *for this cause God would send them strong delusions* (the efficacy of error) *that they should believe a lye, and that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*; that is, as a just punishment for their renouncing the truth, GOD gave them over to the power of delusion; their error had it's full scope given them, to tempt them with all it's colours and pretences

But it is obſervable, that, in all theſe places which ave mention'd, GOD is ſaid to give men up to the er of temptation, as a puniſhment of ſome for- great crimes and provocations. And it is not unjuſt GOD thus to deal with men, to leave them to power of temptation, when they had firſt wilfully iken him; and in this caſe GOD doth not tempt to ſin, but leaves them to themſelves, to be pted by their own hearts luſts; and if they yield and conquered, it is their own fault, becauſe they have lected GOD's grace, whereby they might have been a- to have reſiſted thoſe temptations; and have forced HOLY SPIRIT to withdraw himſelf from them, to leave them open and naked to thoſe aſſaults of ptation, againſt which they might otherwiſe have ſufficiently armed.

Thirdly, the laſt end of temptation which I men- ed, is to try men, with a direct purpoſe and in- ion to ſeduce men to ſin. Thus wicked men tempt ers, and thus the devil tempts men. Thus he pted our firſt parents, and ſeduced them from their dience and allegiance to GOD. Thus he tempted by bringing him into thoſe circumſtances, which very likely to have forced him into impatience and ntent. And thus he tempted our bleſſed SAVIOUR, *found nothing in him* to work upon, or to give him advantage over him. And thus he daily tempts by laying all ſorts of baits and ſnares before them, *g about continually, ſeeking whom he may* ſeduce and oy; and as far as GOD permits him, and his power heth, he ſuits his temptations as near he can to the nours and appetites and inclinations of men, con- ing them into ſuch circumſtances, as that he may his temptations upon them to the greateſt advantage; ounding ſuch objects to them, as may moſt pro- draw forth the corruptions of men, and kindle irregular deſires, and inflame their luſts, and tempt evil inclinations that way, which they are moſt gly bent. He tempts the covetous man with gain, ambitious man with preferment, the voluptuous

man

man with carnal and sensual pleasures; and where no of these baits will take, he stirs up his instruments persecute those, who are stedfast and confirmed in re lutions of piety and virtue, to try if he can work u their fear, and shake their constancy and fidelity to G and goodness that way; and all that he doth with a rect design and earnest desire to seduce men from t duty, and to betray them to sin.

But thus GOD *tempts no man*, and in this sense i that the apostle means that *no man when he is tempt is tempted of* GOD. GOD hath no design to seduce man to sin. He often proves the obedience of m and suffers them to *fall into divers temptations*, for *trial of their faith*, and exercise of their obedience other virtues; and he permits bad men to be assau with great temptations, and as a punishment of t former obstinacy and impiety, withdraws the aids assistances of his grace from them, and leaves them their own weakness and folly; but not so as to take way all restraint of his grace even from bad men, un it be upon very high provocation, and a long and ob nate continuance in sin: but GOD never tempts a man, with any intention to seduce him to sin, and w a desire he should do wickedly. This is the pro work of the devil and his instruments; in this sense i far from GOD *to tempt any man*; and whenever in ordinary course, and by the common permission of providence, men *fall into temptation*, the utmost GOD does, is *to leave them to themselves*; and he d not do this neither, but to those who have highly p voked him to depart from them, that is, to those w have justly deserved to be so dealt withal.

And thus I have considered the proposition which apostle here rejects, namely, *that* GOD *tempts men*, have shewn as clearly as I can, how it is to be limi and understood. I now proceed to the second th which I propounded to consider, *viz.* The manner which the apostle rejects this proposition, *Let no m say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD. which manner of speaking, he insinuates two things.

Fir

First, that men are apt to lay their faults upon God. For when he ſays, *Let no man ſay ſo*, he intimates that men were apt *to ſay* thus; and 'tis probable ſome *did ſay ſo*, to excuſe themſelves for their deſerting their religion upon the temptation of perſecution and ſuffering. 'Tis not unlikely that men might lay the fault upon God's providence, which expoſed them to theſe difficult trials, and thereby tempted them to forſake their religion.

But however this be, we find it very natural to men, to transfer their faults upon others. Men are naturally ſenſible when they offend, and do contrary to their duty; and the guilt of ſin is an heavy burthen, of which men would be glad to eaſe themſelves as much as they can; and they think it is a mitigation and excuſe of their faults, if they did not proceed only from themſelves, but from the violence and compulſion, the temptation and inſtigation of others. But eſpecially men are very glad to lay their faults upon God, becauſe that is a full and ſufficient excuſe, nothing being to be blamed that comes from him. Thus Adam did, upon the commiſſion of the very firſt ſin that mankind was guilty of. When God charged him for breaking of his law, by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree, he endeavours to excuſe himſelf by laying the fault obliquely upon God; *The woman whom thou gaveſt to be with me, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat. The woman whom thou gaveſt to be with me*; he does what he can to derive the fault upon God. And tho' this be very unreaſonable, yet it ſeems it is very natural. Men would fain have the pleaſure of committing ſin, but wiſh they would be glad to remove as much of the guilt and guilt of it from themſelves as they can.

Secondly, this manner of ſpeech, which the apoſtle here uſeth, doth inſinuate further to us, that it is not only a falſe, but an impious aſſertion to ſay that God tempts men to ſin. He ſpeaks of it, not only as a thing unfit to be ſaid, but fit to be rejected with the higheſt indignation; *let no man ſay*, that is, far be it from us to affirm any thing ſo impious and ſo diſhonourable

nourable to GOD. For nothing can be more contr
to the holy and righteous nature of GOD, and to th
plain declarations which he hath made of himself, th
to seduce men to wickedness; and therefore no m
that hath any regard to the honour of GOD, can ent
tain the least suspicion of his having any hand in the
of men, or give heed to any principles or doctrines, fr
whence so odious and abominable a consequence may
drawn. I proceed to the

Third thing I propounded to consider, viz. T
reason or argument which the apostle brings aga
this impious suggestion; *That* GOD *cannot be tem*
with evil, and therefore no man can imagine that
should *tempt any man* to it; *Let no man say, when h*
tempted, I am tempted of GOD, *for* GOD *cannot be tem*
with evil, neither tempteth he any man. And in spe
ing to this, I shall

First, consider the strength and force of this a
ment; And

Secondly, the nature and kind of it.

First, The strength and force of this argument, G
cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any
ἀπείραστος ἐστὶ κακῶν, *he is untemptable by*
he cannot be drawn to any thing that is bad him
and therefore it cannot be imagined he should have
inclination or design to seduce others. And this will
pear to be a strong and forcible argument, if we consi

First, the proposition upon which it is groun
that GOD *cannot be tempted by evil.*

Secondly, the consequence that clearly follows
it; and that is, that because GOD cannot be tempted
evil, therefore *he cannot tempt any man to it.*

First, we will consider the proposition upon w
this argument is built, and that is, *that* GOD *cann*
tempted by evil. He is out of the reach of any te
tation to evil. Whoever is tempted to any thing
either tempted by his own inclination, or by the al
ment of the object, or by some external motive and
sideration: but none of all these can be imagined to
any place in GOD, to tempt him to evil.

For, firſt, he hath no temptation to it from his own
ination. The holy and pure nature of GOD is at
greateſt diſtance from evil, and at the greateſt con-
iety to it. He is ſo far from having any inclination
evil, that it is the only thing in the world to which
hath an irreconcilable antipathy. This the Scripture
quently declares to us, and that in a very emphatical
nner, Pſal. v. 4. *He is not a* GOD *that hath pleaſure
wickedneſs, neither ſhall evil dwell with him.* The
rds are a diminution, and leſs is ſaid, than is in-
ded by them; the meaning is, that GOD is ſo far
m taking pleaſure in ſin, that he hath a perfect hatred
ebhorrence of it, Hab. ii. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes
n to behold evil, and canſt not look upon iniquity.* As
n men hate a thing to the higheſt degree, they turn
y their eyes, and cannot endure to look upon it.
ht and darkneſs are not more oppoſite to one another,
n the holy nature of GOD is to ſin. *What fellowſhip
light with darkneſs, or* GOD *with Belial?*

Secondly, there is no allurement in the object, to
up any inclination in him towards it. Sin in it's very
re is imperfection and irregularity, crookedneſs and
rmity; ſo that unleſs there be an inclination to it
re-hand, there is nothing in it to move any one's
g or deſire towards it; it hath no attractives or en-
ments in it, but to a corrupt and ill-diſpoſed mind.

Thirdly, neither are there external motives and con-
ations, that can be imagined to tempt GOD to it.
arguments that have any temptation, are either
ded in hope or in fear; either in the hope of gaining
e benefit or advantage, or in the fear of falling into
e miſchief or inconvenience. Now the divine nature
g perfectly happy, and perfectly ſecured in it's own
pineſs, is out of the reach of any of theſe tempta-
. Men are many times tempted to evil very
gly by theſe conſiderations; they want many things
ake them happy, and they fear many things which
make them miſerable; and the hopes of the one,
the fears of the other, are apt to work very power-
y upon them, to ſeduce them from their duty, and

to

to draw them to ſin: but the divine nature is firm gainſt all theſe attempts, by it's own fullneſs and ſe rity. So that you ſee now the propoſition, upon wh the apoſtle grounds his argument, is evidently true, beyond all exception, *that* GOD *cannot be tempted evil.* Let us then in the

Second place, conſider the conſequence that cle follows from it; that becauſe GOD cannot be tem with evil, *therefore he cannot tempt any man to it.* why ſhould he deſire to draw men into that, whic himſelf ahhors, and which is ſo contrary to his own ture and diſpoſition? When men tempt one anothe ſin, they do it to make others like themſelves; when the devil tempts men to ſin, it is either out of rect malice to GOD, or out of envy to men. But of theſe conſiderations can have any place in GOD, any motive to him to tempt men to ſin.

Bad men tempt others to ſin, to make them themſelves, and that with one of theſe two deſi either for the comfort or pleaſure of company, o the countenance of it, that there may be ſome ki apology and excuſe for them.

For the comfort and pleaſure of company. Man not love to be alone; and for this reaſon bad men e vour to make others like themſelves, that agreeing them in the ſame diſpoſition and manners, they m fit company for them. For no man takes pleaſu the ſociety and converſation of thoſe, who are of trary tempers and inclinations to them, becauſe the continually warring and claſhing with one ano And for this reaſon bad men hate and perſecute that are good. *Let us lie in wait* (ſay they) *righteous, becauſe he is not for our turn, and he is trary to our doings; he is grievous unto us even hold; for his life is not like other mens, and his way of another faſhion*; as it is expreſſed in the Wiſd Solomon. So that wicked men tempt others to that they may have the pleaſure and contentme their ſociety. But now for this reaſon GOD cann imagined to tempt men to ſin; becauſe that w

the way to make them unlike himſelf, and ſuch as ſoul could take no pleaſure in.

Another deſign that bad men have in ſeducing others ſin, is thereby to give countenance to their bad actions, d to be ſome kind of excuſe and apology for them. Among men, the multitude of offenders does ſome-es procure impunity, but it always gives countenance vice; and men are apt to alledge it in their excuſe, t they are not alone guilty of ſuch a fault, that they not do it without company and example; which is reaſon of that law, Exod. xxiii. 2. *Thou ſhalt not low a multitude to do evil*; implying, that men are y apt to take encouragement to any thing that is bad, company and example. But neither hath this on any place in God, who being far from doing evil ſelf, can have no reaſon to tempt others to do ſo, by of excuſe and vindication of himſelf.

And when the devil tempts men to ſin, it is either of direct malice to God, our out of envy to men. of malice to God to ſpoil his workmanſhip, and ervert that which came innocent and upright out of hands; to rob God of his ſubjects, and to de-h them from their duty and allegiance to him; to gthen the rebellion which he has raiſed againſt God, ſo make him as many enemies as he can. But for end God cannot tempt any man; for this would procure diſhonour to himſelf, and to deface the k of his own hands.

Another reaſon why the devil tempts men, is envy. en he was fallen from God, and happineſs, and by own rebellion had made himſelf miſerable, he was ntented to ſee the happy condition of man, and *it ed him at his very heart*; and this moved him to pt man to ſin, that he might involve him in the miſery into which he had plunged himſelf. It is a ure to envy to overturn the happineſs of others, to lay them level with themſelves. But the divine re is full of goodneſs, and delights in the happineſs all his creatures. His own incomparable felicity has ed him as much above any temptation to envying

others, as above any occaſion of being contemned by them. He grudges no man's happineſs, and therefore can not tempt men to ſin, out of a deſire to ſee them miſerable. So that none of thoſe conſiderations which move the devil to tempt men to ſin, and evil men to tempt one another to do wickedly, can be imagined to have any place in GOD.

And thus you ſee the force of the apoſtle's argument, that becauſe GOD *cannot be tempted to evil*, therefore *he can tempt no man*. None tempt others to be bad but thoſe who are firſt ſo themſelves. I ſhall now proceed to the

Second place, conſider the nature and kind of the argument, which the apoſtle here uſeth, *Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD; *for* God *cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* It does not reject this impious propoſition barely upon his own authority; but he argues againſt it from the nature and perfection of GOD; and therein appeals to the common notion of mankind concerning GOD. He might very well have reſted in his authority, being an apoſtle commiſſioned by our SAVIOUR, and extraordinarily aſſiſted and witneſſed to, by the miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST, wherewith he was endowed. But he condeſcends to give a reaſon of what he ſays, and appeals to the common principles of mankind. For all men will readily agree to this, *that* GOD *hath all imaginable perfection:* But it is a plain imperfection to be liable to be tempted to evil, and therefore GOD *cannot be tempted to evil.* And if ſo, it is as impoſſible *that he ſhould tempt others to it*; for none can have either an inclination or intereſt to ſeduce others to evil, but they who have been firſt ſeduced to it themſelves.

Now in this method of arguing, the apoſtle teaches us one of the ſureſt ways of reaſoning in religion; namely, from the *natural notions which men have of* GOD. That all doctrines plainly contrary to thoſe natural notions which men have of GOD, are to be rejected, what authority ſoever they pretend to; whatever plainly derogates from the goodneſs or juſtice of GOD, or any other

of his perfections, is certainly false, what authority so-
ever it may claim from the judgment of learned and
ious men; yea tho' it pretend to be countenanc'd from
e texts and expressions of holy Scripture. Because
thing can be entertain'd as a divine revelation, which
inly contradicts the common natural notions which
kind have of GOD. For all reasoning about divine
elation, and whether that which pretends to be so,
really so or not, is to be govern'd by those natural
ions. And if any thing that pretends to be a reve-
on from GOD, should teach men that there is no
, or that he is not wise, and good, and just, and
erful; this is reason enough to reject it, how confi-
soever the pretence be, that it is a divine reve-
n.

nd if any thing be, upon good grounds in reason,
ved for a divine revelation, (as the holy Scriptures
mongst Christians) no man ought to be regarded,
from thence pretends to maintain any doctrine con-
to the natural notions, which men have of GOD;
as clearly contradict his holiness, or goodness, or
e, or do by plain and undeniable consequence make
the author of sin, or the like; because the very
pt to prove any such thing out of Scripture, does
at the divine authority of those books. For if
be from GOD, it is certain they can contain no
thing. So that no man ought to suffer himself to
duced into any such opinions, upon pretence that
are expressions in Scripture, which seem to counte-
them. For if they really did so, the consequence
d not be the confirming of such opinions; but the
ning of the authority of the Scripture itself.
ust so many arguments as any man can draw from
ture for any such opinion, so many weapons he puts
the hands of atheists against the Scripture itself.
do not speak this, as if I thought there were any
d from Scripture for any such doctrine, I am very
n there is not. And if there be any particular ex-
ions, which to prejudic'd men may seem to import
such thing, every man ought to govern himself in

the interpretation of ſuch paſſages, by what is clear and plain, and agreeable to the main ſcope and tenor of the Bible, and to thoſe natural notions which men have of GOD, and of his perfections. For when all is done this is one of the ſureſt ways of reaſoning in religion and whoever guides himſelf, and ſteers by this compaſs, can never err much: but whoever ſuffers himſelf to be led away by the appearance of ſome more obſcure phraſes in the expreſſions of Scripture, and the gloſſes of men upon them, without regard to this rule, may run into the greateſt deluſions, may wander eternally, and loſe himſelf in one miſtake after another, and ſhall never find his way out of this endleſs labyrinth, but by this clue.

If St James had not been an apoſtle, the argument which he uſeth would have convinced any reaſonable man, *that* GOD *tempts no man to ſin*, becauſe *he cannot be tempted with evil himſelf*, and therefore it is unreaſonable to imagine *he ſhould tempt any man*. For he argues from ſuch a principle, as all mankind will, at firſt hearing, aſſent to.

And thus I have done with the firſt thing aſſerted in the apoſtle here in the text: *That* GOD *tempts no man to ſin. Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD; *for* GOD *cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man.* Before I proceed to the ſecond aſſertion, *That every man is his own greateſt tempter*, I ſhould draw ſome uſeful inferences from what hath been already delivered: but I reſerve both the one and the other to the next opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON CXVI.

The ſins of men not chargeable upon GOD; but upon themſelves.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

JAMES i. 13, 14.

Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of GOD; *for* GOD *cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed.*

WHEN I made entrance upon theſe words, I told you, that next to the belief of a GOD and a providence, nothing is more fundamentally neceſſary to the practice of a good life, than the belief of theſe two principles; *that* GOD *is not the author of the ſins of men*; *and that every man's fault is at his own door.* And both theſe principles St James does clearly and fully aſſert in theſe words.

Firſt, GOD *tempts no man to ſin.*

Secondly, *Every man is his own greateſt tempter.*

The firſt of theſe I have largely ſpoken to in my former diſcourſe; and from what I then ſaid, I ſhall only draw a few uſeful inferences, before I proceed to the ſecond, *viz.* theſe which follow.

Firſt, let us beware of all ſuch doctrines, as do any way tend to make GOD the author of ſin; either by laying a neceſſity upon men of ſinning, or by laying ſnares and deſigns to tempt and ſeduce men to ſin. Nothing can be farther from the nature of GOD, than to do any ſuch thing, and nothing can be more diſhonourable to him, than to imagine any ſuch thing of him; *he is of purer*

purer eyes than to behold evil; and can we think, th
he, who cannot endure to see it, should have any ha
in it? We find, that the holy men in Scripture
very careful to remove all thoughts and suspicion of t
from GOD. Elihu, Job xxxvi. 3. before he would
gue about GOD's providence with Job, he resolves
the first place, to attribute nothing to GOD, that is
worthy of him. *I will* (says he) *ascribe righteous*
to my maker. So likewise St Paul, Rom. vii. 7. *W*
shall we say then? Is the law sin? GOD *forbid. I*
law sin? That is, hath GOD given men a law to t
end, that he might draw them into sin? Far be it fr
him. Gal. ii. 17. *Is* CHRIST *the minister of si*
GOD *forbid*.

You see then how tender good men have always b
of ascribing any thing to GOD, that might seem
render him the author of sin. So that we have rea
to take heed of all doctrines that are of this tendenc
such as are the doctrines of an absolute and irrespect
decree to damn the greatest part of mankind; and
order to that, and as a means to it, efficaciously to p
mit men to sin. For, if these things be true, that G
hath absolutely decreed to damn the greatest part
men, and to make good this decree, he permits th
to sin, not by a bare permission of leaving them to the
selves, but by such a permission as shall be efficacio
that is, he will so permit them to sin, as they can
avoid it; then those, who are under this decree of G
are under a necessity of sinning; which necessity, s
it does not proceed from themselves, but from the
cree of GOD, does by consequence make GOD the aut
of sin. And then that the other doctrine, which is s
servient to this, that GOD does, by a physical and
tural influence upon the minds and wills of men, determ
them to every action that they do, to bad actions as
as good. I know they, who say so, tell us, that G
only determines men to the action, but not to the
of it. For instance, when Cain killed his brother, G
determined him (they say) to the natural action
taking away a man's life, which in many cases ma

e without ſin. Very true: But if in theſe circum-
ces the natural action could not be done without
mitting the ſin, he that determined him to the na-
l action, determined him likewiſe to the ſin.

I am far from any thought that thoſe, that maintain
e doctrines, had any intention to make GOD the au-
of ſin: but, if this be the true neceſſary conſequence
theſe doctrines, there is reaſon enough to reject
m, how innocent ſoever the intention be of thoſe
o maintain them.

Secondly, let not us tempt any man to ſin. All
y pretends to be an imitation of GOD, therefore let
endeavour to be like him in this. 'Tis true indeed,
may be tempted with evil, and therefore we are
ly enough to tempt others; but we ought not to
ſo. It is contrary to holineſs and goodneſs, to the
per and diſpoſition of the moſt perfect being in the
rld. GOD tempts no man; nay, it is the proper
rk and employment of the devil, 'tis his very trade
d profeſſion; he goes about ſeeking whom he may
ray into ſin and deſtruction. To this end he walks
and down the earth, waiting all opportunities and
ntages upon men to draw them into ſin; ſo that we
his factors and inſtruments, whenever we tempt
et to ſin.

Let thoſe conſider this, who are ſo active and buſy to
ce men into any kind of wickedneſs, and to inſtruct
m in the arts of iniquity, who tempt men into bad
pany and courſes, and take pleaſure in debauching
virtuous perſon, and make it matter of great triumph
make a ſober man drunk, as if it were ſo glorious an
ion to ruin a ſoul, and deſtroy that, which is more
rth than the whole world. Whenever you go about
is work, remember whoſe inſtruments you are, and
hoſe work you do, and what kind of work it is.
empting others to ſin, is in Scripture called murder;
which reaſon the devil is ſaid to be *a murderer from
e beginning*, becauſe he was a tempter. *Whoſoever
mmitteth ſin is of the devil*; but whoſoever tempts
ers to ſin, is a ſort of devil himſelf.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, ſince GOD tempts no man, let us not tempt him. There is frequent mention in Scripture of men tempting GOD, *i. e.* trying him, as it were, whether he will do any thing for their ſakes, that is miſbecoming his goodneſs, and wiſdom, and faithfulneſs, or any other of his perfections. Thus the Iſraelites are ſaid to have *tempted* GOD *in the wilderneſs forty years together*, and in that ſpace, more remarkably ten times. The meaning of which expreſſions is, that when GOD had promiſed Abraham to bring his ſeed into the land of Canaan, that people, by their great and repeated provocations of GOD, did often provoke him to have deſtroyed them, and conſequently to have failed of the promiſe which he made to the fathers. The devil likewiſe tempted our SAVIOUR to tempt GOD, by caſting himſelf down from the pinacle of the temple, in confidence that the angels would take care of him: but our SAVIOUR anſwers him, *it is written thou ſhalt not tempt the* LORD *thy* GOD. From which inſtance it appears that men are ſaid to tempt GOD, whenever they expect the protection of his providence in an unwarrantable way. GOD hath promiſed to take care of good men; but if they neglect themſelves, or willingly caſt themſelves into danger, and expect his providence and protection, they do not truſt GOD, but tempt him; that is, try whether GOD's providence will countenance their raſhneſs, and provide for them, when they neglect themſelves; and protect them from thoſe dangers to which they wilfully expoſe themſelves.

So likewiſe if we be negligent in our callings, whereby we ſhould provide for our families, if we laviſh away that which we ſhould lay up for them, and then depend upon the providence of GOD to ſupply them, and take care of them, we tempt GOD to that which is unworthy of him; which is to give approbation to our folly, and to countenance our ſloth and careleſſneſs. We cannot ſeduce GOD, and draw him to do any thing that miſbecomes him, but we tempt him, in expecting the care and protection of his providence, when we wilfully run our ſelves into danger, and neglect the means of pro-

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ing for our own ſafety. And thus I have done with
firſt great principle contained in the text; viz. *That
is not the author of the ſins of men.* I proceed now
the
econd, that every man is his own greateſt tempter.
*every man is tempted, when he is drawn aſide of his
luſt, and enticed.* God does not tempt any man
n: but every man is then tempted, when by his
luſt, his irregular inclination and deſire, he is ſe-
d to evil, and enticed; καὶ δελεαζόμενος, is
ht as it were with a bait, for ſo the Greek word
ifies.
which words the apoſtle gives us a true account
e prevalency and efficacy of temptation upon men.
not becauſe God has any deſign to enſnare men in
but their own corruption and vicious inclinations
e them to that which is evil. To inſtance in the
icular temptations the apoſtle was ſpeaking of, per-
ion and ſuffering for the cauſe of religion, to avoid
h, many did then forſake the truth, and apoſtatized
their Chriſtian profeſſion. The true cauſe of
h, was not the providence of God, which permitted
to be expoſed to thoſe ſufferings; but their inor-
e love of the good things of this life, and their un-
nable fears of the evils and ſufferings of it; they
d the enjoyments of this preſent life, more than
favour of God, and that eternal happineſs which
had promiſed to them in another life; and they
t the perſecutions of men, more than the threat-
of God, and the dreadful puniſhments of another
d. They had an inordinate affection for the eaſe
pleaſure of this life, and their unwillingneſs to part
eaſe, was a great temptation to them to quit their
ion; by this bait they were caught, when it came
e trial.
nd thus it is proportionably in all other ſorts of
tations. Men are betrayed by themſelves, and the
tation without hath a party within them, with
h it holds a ſecret correſpondence, and which is
y to yield and give conſent to it; ſo that it is our

own

own conſent, and treachery to our ſelves, that ma
any temptation maſter of us, and without that we
not to be overcome; *every man is tempted, when h
drawn aſide of his own luſt, and enticed.* It is the
of men complying with the temptations which are offe
to us, which renders them effectual, and gives them
victory over us.

In the handling of this argument, I ſhall from th
words of the apoſtle obſerve to you theſe two things.

Firſt, that as the apoſtle doth here acquit God fr
any hand in tempting men to ſin, ſo he does not aſcr
the prevalency of temptation to the devil.

Secondly, that he aſcribes the prevalency of temp
tion to the luſt and vicious inclinations of men, wh
ſeduce them to a compliance with the temptations t
are preſented to them; *every man is tempted, when
is drawn aſide of his own luſt, and enticed.* Theſe t
obſervations ſhall be the ſubject of my preſent diſcour

Firſt, that as the apoſtle doth here acquit God fr
any hand in tempting men to ſin, ſo he does not aſcr
the prevalency and efficacy of temptation to the de
That he acquits God, I have ſhewn at large in
former diſcourſe. It is evident likewiſe, that he d
not aſcribe the efficacy and prevalency of temptation
the devil; for the apoſtle in this diſcourſe of his c
cerning temptations, makes no expreſs mention of
devil; he ſuppoſeth indeed, that baits are laid for m
*every man is tempted, when he is drawn aſide of his o
luſt, and enticed*; i. e. when he plays with the baits t
are laid for him, and ſwallows them. And the Script
elſewhere frequently tells us, that the devil is very act
and buſy to tempt men, and is continually laying b
before them; but their own luſts are the cauſe w
they are caught by them.

And I do the rather inſiſt upon this, becauſe men
apt to lay great load upon the devil, in the buſineſs
temptation, hoping thereby either wholly, or at le
in a great meaſure, to excuſe themſelves; and therefo
I ſhall here conſider, how far the devil by his temp
tio

ons is the cauſe of the ſins, which men, by compliance
th thoſe temptations, are drawn into.

First, it is certain that the devil is very active and
to miniſter to them the occaſions of ſin, and tempta-
s to it. For ever ſince he fell from God, partly
of enmity to him, and partly out of envy and ma-
to mankind, he hath made it his great buſineſs and
loyment to ſeduce men to ſin; and to this end he
s up and down the earth, and watcheth all occaſions
opportunities to tempt men to ſin: and ſo far as his
er reacheth, and God permits him, he lays baits
temptations before them in all their ways, preſenting
with the occaſions and opportunities to ſin, and
ſuch baits and allurements as are moſt ſuitable to
tempers, and moſt likely to prevail with their par-
r inclinations, and as often as he can, ſurprizing
with theſe at the eaſieſt time of acceſs, and with
circumſtances, as may give his temptations the
eſt force and advantage. Of this the Scripture
es us in general, when it tells us of theſe wiles and
s of Satan, and of the methods of his temptations;
t tho' we do not particularly diſcern how and
he doth this, yet we have no reaſon to doubt of
ing, if we believe that there is ſuch a ſpirit in the
, as the Scripture particularly tells us there is, that
in the children of diſobedience, and that God, from
nothing is hid, and who ſees all the ſecret engines
are at work in the world, to do us good or harm,
in mercy to mankind given us particular warning of
i that we may not be wholly ignorant of our ene-
and their malicious deſigns upon us, that we may
ntinually upon our guard, aware of our danger,
rmed againſt it.

ondly, the devil does not only preſent to men the
ations and occaſions of ſin; but, when he is per-
d to make nearer approaches to them, does excite
r them up to comply with theſe temptations, and
d to them. And this he does, not only by em-
g his inſtruments to ſolicit for him, and to draw
o ſin by bad counſel and example, which we ſee
frequently

frequently done, and probably very often by the de
inſtigation; (thoſe who are very wicked themſelves,
conſequently more enſlaved to the devil, and under
power, being as it were factors for him to ſeduce other
beſides this, 'tis not improbable but the devil him
does many times immediately excite men to ſin,
working upon the humours of their bodies, or
their imaginations; and by that means infuſing and
geſting evil motions into them; or by diverting th
from thoſe thoughts and conſiderations, which m
check and reſtrain them from that wickedneſs to wh
he is tempting them; or by ſome other ways and m
more ſecret and unknown to us. For the power of
ſpirits, whether good or bad, and the manner of t
operations upon our minds, are things very ſecret,
of which we can give little or no account; but yet
all that, we have many times reaſon ſufficient to be
a thing to be ſo, when we are wholly ignorant of
manner of it.

And there is reaſon, for what is ſaid in Scripture,
believe that the devil, in ſome caſes, hath a more
mediate power and influence upon the minds of men
excite them to ſin, and, where he diſcovers a very
inclination or reſolution, to help it forward, and to
men to it; as when it is ſaid, John xiii. 27. that
devil entered into Judas, to puſh him on in that ill
ſign which he had already engaged in, of betraying
SAVIOUR. And Acts v. 3. Satan is ſaid to have
the heart of Ananias, to lye to the HOLY GHOST,
to keep back part of the price for which he had ſold
eſtate; which expreſſions do ſeem to intimate to
ſome more immediate power and influence which
devil had upon thoſe perſons: but then 'tis very
ſervable, that this power is never aſcribed to the de
but in the caſe of great and horrid ſins, and where
are beforehand notoriouſly depraved, and either by
actual commiſſion of ſome former great ſin, or by
tertaining ſome very wicked deſign, have provoked G
to permit the devil a nearer acceſs to them. For J
had firſt taken counſel how to betray CHRIST, &c

is ſaid *the devil entered into him,* to puſh him on to execution of it. And Ananias his covetouſneſs had ſt tempted him to keep back part of his eſtate, fore it is ſaid *the devil filled his heart to lye to the* LY GHOST; ſo that what power the devil hath over m, they firſt give it him; they conſent to his out- rd temptations, before he can get within them. nce it is, that in Scripture great ſinners are deſcribed, being more immediately under the government and luence of the devil. Ephef. ii. 1, 2. where the apo- ſpeaking of thoſe, who from Heatheniſm were con- ted to Chriſtianity, *you* (ſays he) *hath he quickened, o were once dead in treſpaſſes and ſins; wherein in s paſt ye walked, according to the courſe of this rld, according to the prince of the power of the air, ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience,* unbelief; τῦ πνέυματος τῦ νῦν ἐνεργῦντος, *the it that ſtill acts and inſpires the children of unbelief*; t is, thoſe who continue in their infidelity, and uld not believe and obey the goſpel. When men are orioufly wicked and diſobedient to the counſels of p, the devil is ſaid to act and inſpire them, which ainly ſignifies ſome more immediate power and in- nce which he hath over ſuch perſons.

For as it is very probable, that the devil is ſometimes mitted to come near good men ſo as to tempt them; by notorious wickedneſs and impiety, men do give miſſion to him, and he is permitted, by the juſt judg- t of GOD, to exerciſe greater dominion over them. reſiſting his temptations, we drive him from us. So James tells us, chap. iv. ver. 7. *Reſiſt the devil, and will flee from you:* but as we yield to his tempta- s, he continually makes nearer approaches to us, gains a greater power over us.

Thirdly, but for all this, the devil can force no man in; his temptations may move and excite men to but that they are prevalent and effectual, proceeds our own will and conſent; 'tis our own luſts ng with his temptations, that produce ſin, the hath more or leſs power over men, according as

they give way to him; but never so much as to for their wills, and to compel them to consent to, and com ply with his temptations; the grace of God do hardly offer this violence to men for their good, in ord to their salvation; and therefore much less will he pe mit the devil to have this power over men to their r and destruction. God's commanding us to resist devil, supposeth that his temptations are not irresistibl

Fourthly, from what has been said, it appears, t tho' the devil be frequently accessary to the sins of m yet we our selves are the authors of them; he tem us many times to sin, but it is we that commit it. temptations may sometimes be so violent as to extenu our fault, but never so forcible as wholly to excuse for we are so far guilty of sin, as we give our cons to it; and how powerful soever the temptation be any kind of evil, there is always enough of our o will in it to render us guilty.

I am far from thinking that the devil tempts men all the evil that they do. I rather think that greatest part of the wickedness, that is committed the world, springs from the evil motions of mens minds. Mens own lusts are generally to them the w devil of the two, and do more strongly incline t to sin, than any devil without them can tempt t to it. It is not to be doubted, that the devil does the mischief he can to the souls of men, so fa God permits him; and tho' the number of evil an be probably very great, yet it is but finite, and e one of them hath a limited power; and tho' the very active, yet they can be but one where at once that his malice at the utmost does only all the evil it can, not all that it would; he plies where he has best custom, where he has the fairest opportunity, the greatest hopes; he leaves men many times f season (as it is said) he did our Saviour, becaus despairs of success at that time; and it may be fi times when he is gone, these persons grow secure, through their own security and folly fall into those which the devil with all his baits and wiles, whilst

ere upon their guard, could not tempt them to com-

Others after he has made them ſure, and put them
o the way of it, will go on of themſelves, and are
mad of ſinning, as forward to deſtroy themſelves, as
devil himſelf could wiſh; ſo that he can hardly
pt men to any wickedneſs, which he does not find
n inclined to of themſelves. Theſe he can truſt
h themſelves, and leave them to their own inclina-
s and conduct, finding by experience, that they will
s ill things of their own motion, as if Satan ſtood
inually at their right hand to prompt them, and put
n on, ſo that he can go into a far country, and em-
himſelf elſewhere, and leave them for a long time,
confident that in his abſence they will not bury
talent, and hide it in a napkin, but will improve
a great advantage. And I wiſh that our own age
ot afford us too many inſtances of this kind, of ſuch
ard and expert ſinners as need no tempter either to
uct or excite them to that which is evil. Now in
caſe the devil betakes himſelf to other perſons, and
ves his ſnares and baits where he thinks there is
e need and occaſi n for them.

o that we may reaſonably conclude, that there is a
deal of wickedneſs committed in the world, which
evil hath no immediate hand in, tho' he always re-
ch in it when it is done; and that there is a great
more reaſon to attribute all good to the motions and
tions of the SPIRIT of GOD, than to aſcribe all
nd wickedneſs in the world to the devil; becauſe
SPIRIT of GOD is more powerful, and is always
where, and is more intent upon his deſign, and as
ard to promote it, as the devil can be to carry on
work; nay, I doubt not but he is more active to
e men to good, than the devil can be to tempt
to evil. And yet for all this, I think there is no
reaſon to doubt, but that good men do many
ctions of their own inclination, without any ſpe-
nd immediate motion from the SPIRIT of GOD.
are indeed at firſt regenerate, and ſanctified by the

HOLY GHOST, and are continually afterwards under the conduct of the ſame SPIRIT: but where there is a new nature, it is of itſelf inclinable to that which is good, and will bring forth fruits, and do actions anſwerable. Much leſs do I think that the devil tempts every man to all the evil that he does, or the greater part. When the luſts of men, and the habits of vice are grown ſtrong and confirmed, the devil may ſpare his temptations in a great meaſure; for after wicked men are wound up to ſuch a pitch of impiety, they will do a great while of themſelves.

I have done with the firſt obſervation, that as the apoſtle acquits GOD from having any hand in tempting men to ſin, ſo neither does he aſcribe the efficacy and prevalency of temptation to the devil. I proceed to the

Second obſervation, that he aſcribes the efficacy and ſucceſs of temptation to the luſts and vicious inclinations of men, which ſeduce them to a conſent and compliance with the temptations which are afforded to them. *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aſide of his own luſt, and enticed.* We have many powerful enemies; but we are much more in danger of treachery from within than of aſſaults from without. All the power of our enemies could not deſtroy us, if we were but true to ourſelves; ſo that the apoſtle had great reaſon to aſcribe the efficacy of temptation to the irregular deſires and vicious inclinations of men, rather than to thoſe temptations which the providence of GOD permits them to be aſſaulted with, and conſequently to lay the blame of mens ſins chiefly upon themſelves.

And that chiefly upon theſe two accounts:

Firſt, becauſe the luſts of men are in a great meaſure voluntary.

Secondly, GOD hath put it in our power to reſiſt thoſe temptations, and overcome them. Now ſo far as the luſts of men are voluntary, it is their own fault that they are ſeduced by them, and if GOD hath put it in our power to reſiſt and overcome temptations, we may blame ourſelves, if we be overcome and foiled by them.

Firſt,

Firſt, The luſts of men are in a great meaſure volun-
ry. By the luſts of men, I mean their irregular de-
es and vicious inclinations. I grant that the nature of
an is very much corrupted, and degenerated from it's
imitive integrity and perfection: but we who are
riſtians, have received that grace in baptiſm, where-
our natures are ſo far healed, as if we be not want-
g to ourſelves, and do not neglect the means which
D hath appointed to us, we may mortify our luſts, and
e a new life; ſo that if our luſts remain unmortified,
e ourſelves are in fault, much more if they gain new
ength, and proceed to habits; for this could not be,
we did not after we come to age, and are able to diſ-
n between, and to chooſe good and evil, voluntarily
ſent to iniquity, and by wilful and deliberate practice
known ſins, improve the evil inclinations of our na-
e into vicious habits: but if inſtead of mortifying and
luing the evil propenſions of our nature (which is no
y difficult work to moſt perſons, if they begin it be-
es) we will cheriſh and give new life and power to
m, we forfeit the grace which we received in bap-
, and bring ourſelves again under the power and do-
ion of ſin; and no wonder then, if our luſts ſeduce
and make us ready to comply with the temptations
he world and the devil.

May, and after this it is ſtill our own fault, if we
not mortify our luſts; for if we would hearken to
counſel of GOD, and obey his calls to repentance,
ſincerely beg his grace and HOLY SPIRIT to this
poſe, we might yet recover ourſelves, and *by the*
IRIT *mortify the luſts of the fleſh*; for tho' we have
GOD, he hath not quite forſaken us, but is ready
afford his grace again to us, tho' we have neg-
ted and abuſed it, and to give his HOLY SPIRIT
thoſe that aſk him, tho' they have forfeited it, ſo that
our luſts ſpring from ſomething which is natural,
that they live and have dominion over us, is volun-
, becauſe we might remedy it if we would, and
e uſe of thoſe means which GOD in the goſpel offers
.

Secondly, God hath put it in our power to resist these temptations, and overcome them; so that it is our own fault, if we yield to them, and be overcome by them.

It is naturally in our power to resist many sorts of temptations; and the grace of God, if we do not neglect it, and be not wanting to ourselves, puts it in our power to resist any temptation that may happen to us.

First, it is naturally in our power to resist many sorts of temptations. If we do but make use of our natural reason, and those considerations which are common and obvious to men, we may easily resist the temptations to a great many sins. Some sins are so horrid in their nature, that when we have the strongest temptations to them, we cannot but have a natural aversion from them; as deliberate murder, the danger and guilt whereof, are both so great, as make it easy for any considerate man to resist the strongest temptation to it, even that of revenge. A plain act of injustice, whether by great fraud, or by downright oppression, is so base and disgraceful, so odious and abhorred by human nature, that it is not difficult to a man that has but a common understanding, and common inclination to be honest, to overcome the greatest temptation of gain and advantage; nay he must offer considerable violence to his nature and reason, to bring himself to it at first. Prophaneness and contempt of God and religion is so monstrous a fault, and of so dreadful an appearance, that every man that will but use his reason can have no temptation to it, either from gratifying a humour, or pleasing his company, or shewing his wit, that can be of equal force with the arguments which every man's mind and conscience is apt to suggest to him against it.

Nay, there are many sins much inferior to these, temptations whereto may, by the ordinary reasons and considerations of prudence and interest, be baffled and put out of countenance. To instance in common swearing, to which I think there is no temptation

er from pleaſure or advantage, but only from faſhion
cuſtom. Now this temptation is eaſy to be con-
ered, by conſidering that every man that profeſſeth
believe the Bible, muſt acknowledge it to be a ſin;
if any man be convinced that it is a ſin, I dare un-
ake to convince him that he can leave it. He that
chooſe at any time whether he will ſpeak or not
ich it is certainly in every man's power to do) can
oſe whether he will ſwear when he ſpeaks. If he
he does it by cuſtom and habit, and when he does
think of it; a very little care and reſolution will,
ſhort time, cure any man of that cuſtom; ſo that
naturally in every man's power to break off this

econdly, the grace of GOD puts it into our power,
e do not neglect it, and be not wanting to ourſelves,
reſiſt any temptation that may happen to us; and
t the grace of GOD puts into our power, is as truly
r power, as what we can do ourſelves. GOD of-
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And if GOD offers his grace to every man, then it
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, reſiſt any ordinary temptation. And if at any
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s own greateſt tempter. *Every man is tempted,*
he is drawn aſide of his own luſt, and enticed.

And

Secondly, God hath put it in our power to reſiſt theſe temptations, and overcome them; ſo that it is our own fault, if we yield to them, and be overcome by them.

It is naturally in our power to reſiſt many ſorts of temptations; and the grace of God, if we do not neglect it, and be not wanting to ourſelves, puts it in our power to reſiſt any temptation that may happen to us.

Firſt, it is naturally in our power to reſiſt many ſorts of temptations. If we do but make uſe of our natural reaſon, and thoſe conſiderations which are common and obvious to men, we may eaſily reſiſt the temptations to a great many ſins. Some ſins are ſo horrid in their nature, that when we have the ſtrongeſt temptations to them, we cannot but have a natural averſion from them; as deliberate murder, the danger and guilt whereof, are both ſo great, as make it eaſy for any conſiderate man to reſiſt the ſtrongeſt temptation to it, even that of revenge. A plain act of injuſtice, whether by great fraud, or by downright oppreſſion, is ſo baſe and diſgraceful, ſo odious and abhorred by human nature, that it is not difficult to a man that hath but a common underſtanding, and common inclination to be honeſt, to overcome the greateſt temptation of gain and advantage; nay he muſt offer conſiderable violence to his nature and reaſon, to bring himſelf to it at firſt. Prophaneneſs and contempt of God and religion is ſo monſtrous a fault, and of ſo dreadful an appearance, that every man that will but uſe his reaſon, can have no temptation to it, either from gratifying his humour, or pleaſing his company, or ſhewing his wit, that can be of equal force with the arguments which every man's mind and conſcience is apt to ſuggeſt to him againſt it.

Nay, there are many ſins much inferior to theſe, the temptations whereto may, by the ordinary reaſons and conſiderations of prudence and intereſt, be baffled and put out of countenance. To inſtance in common ſwearing, to which I think there is no temptation either

either from pleaſure or advantage, but only from faſhion and cuſtom. Now this temptation is eaſy to be conquered, by conſidering that every man that profeſſeth to believe the Bible, muſt acknowledge it to be a ſin; and if any man be convinced that it is a ſin, I dare undertake to convince him that he can leave it. He that can chooſe at any time whether he will ſpeak or not (which it is certainly in every man's power to do) can chooſe whether he will ſwear when he ſpeaks. If he ſays he does it by cuſtom and habit, and when he does not think of it; a very little care and reſolution will, in a ſhort time, cure any man of that cuſtom; ſo that it is naturally in every man's power to break off this ſin.

Secondly, the grace of GOD puts it into our power, if we do not neglect it, and be not wanting to ourſelves, to reſiſt any temptation that may happen to us; and what the grace of GOD puts into our power, is as truly in our power, as what we can do ourſelves. GOD offers his grace to every man under the goſpel, for he has promiſed *to give his* HOLY SPIRIT *to them that aſk him*, and it is naturally in every man's power to aſk it, otherwiſe the promiſe ſignifies nothing; for if no man can aſk the SPIRIT of GOD, till he firſt have it, then to promiſe it to them that aſk it, is to promiſe it to them who have it already, and then 'tis needleſs to aſk it. And if GOD offers his grace to every man, then it is every man's fault if he have it not; and every man that hath it, may, by the ordinary aſſiſtance of that grace, reſiſt any ordinary temptation. And if at any time GOD ſuffers good men to be aſſaulted, he hath promiſed in ſuch caſes an extraordinary grace and aſſiſtance: and that either *he will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able, or that with the temptation he will find a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it.*

And thus I have done with the ſecond thing I propounded to ſpeak to from theſe words, that every man is his own greateſt tempter. *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aſide of his own luſt, and enticed.*

And

And now the proper inferences from what I have been all this while diſcourſing to you, are theſe three.

Firſt, not to think to excuſe ourſelves, by laying the blame of our ſins upon the temptation of the devil. That the devil tempts us is not our fault, becauſe we cannot help it; but it is our voluntary compliance with his temptations, our conſenting to that evil which he ſolicits us to, which maketh us guilty. *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aſide of his own luſts*; the luſt of our own hearts give the efficacy to the temptations of the devil: men many times ſin upon the motions and ſuggeſtions of the devil: but tho' he be guilty of tempting us, we are guilty of conſenting to his temptations.

Many times we are not ſure that the devil tempts us to ſuch a ſin, but we are ſure that we commit it, and conſequently that we are guilty of it. Nay it is certain, if there were no devil, many would be wicked, and perhaps not much leſs wicked than they are. The luſts and vicious inclinations of men would yield to the temptations of the world, tho' there were none to manage them, and to ſet them on to the greateſt advantage; ſo that we cannot excuſe our faults upon this account, that we are tempted by the devil. If this were a ſufficient excuſe for us, the devil would take no pleaſure in tempting us; the whole deſign of his temptation being to make us guilty, and by the guilt of his ſin to make us miſerable.

Secondly, from hence we learn what reaſon we have to pray to GOD, that he would *not lead us into temptation*, i. e. not permit us to fall into it; for in the phraſe of Scripture, GOD is many times ſaid to do thoſe things which his providence permits to be done. The beſt of us have ſomere mainders of luſt, ſome irregular deſires and appetites, which will be apt to betray us to ſin, when powerful temptations are preſented to us; ſo that it is a great happineſs to the beſt of men, to be kept by the providence of GOD out of the way of violent temptations; for our own ſtrength to reſiſt them is but ſmall, and we are apt to be ſecure, and to neglect our guard

we are eaſy to be ſurprized, and in continual danger through our own weakneſs or carleſſneſs. Our greateſt ſecurity is, if we be ſincere, and heartily deſirous to do well, and firmly reſolved againſt ſin, and do depend upon GOD for his grace and aſſiſtance, that his providence will not ſuffer us to fall into the hands of dangerous and violent temptations, which probably would be too hard for us; he who knows what our ſtrength is, *will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able.*

Thirdly, from hence we may learn the beſt way to diſarm temptations, and to take away the power of them, and that is, by mortifying our luſts, and ſubduing our vicious inclinations. When this is done, (which by the grace of GOD may be done) temptation hath loſt it's greateſt advantage upon us. 'Tis the conſpiracy of our luſts, with the temptations that ſet upon us, that betrays us into their power. The true reaſon why men fall into ſin, is not becauſe they are tempted, but becauſe there is ſomething within them, which inclines and diſpoſes them to comply with the temptation, and to yield to it. It is ſaid, when the devil came to our SAVIOUR to tempt him, that *he found nothing in him,* and therefore his temptations had no force upon him. The more we mortify our luſts, the leſs the devil will find in us, for his temptations to work upon. Every ſpark is dangerous, when it falls upon combuſtible matter; but tho' ſparks fly never ſo thick, there is no danger, ſo long as there is nothing about us to catch fire.

If we will not be drawn aſide and enticed to ſin, let us mortify our luſts; for ſo far as we are mortified, we are out of the power of temptation.

Men are apt to complain of temptations, that they are too hard for them, and that they are not able to reſiſt them, tho' they pray to GOD continually for his aſſiſtance to that purpoſe. This indeed is one means very proper and neceſſary to be uſed; but this is not all that we are to do; we muſt break off habits of ſin, and ſubdue our luſts, and keep under our inclinations, and then we ſhall find our ſelves able to reſiſt and encounter

temptations

temptations with more ſucceſs. And 'till we do this, in vain do we pray for GOD's grace, and depend upon him for ſtrength to overcome the temptations that do aſſault us; for GOD's grace was never deſign'd to countenance the ſloth and negligence of men, but to encourage and ſecond our reſolutions and endeavours of well-doing. If we expect GOD's grace and aſſiſtance upon other terms, we tempt GOD, and provoke him to leave us to the power of temptations, to be *drawn away and enticed by our own luſts.*

SERMON CXVII.

Proving JESUS to be the MESSIAS.

MATTH. xi. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Now when John had heard in priſon the works of CHRIST, *he ſent two of his diſciples, and ſaid unto him, art thou he that ſhould come; or do we look for another?* JESUS *anſwered and ſaid unto them, go and ſhew John again theſe things which ye do hear and ſee. The blind receive their ſight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed up, and the poor have the goſpel preached unto them. And bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.*

ABOUT the time of our SAVIOUR's appearing in the world, there was a general expectation of a great prince, that ſhould come out of Judea, and govern all nations: this the Gentiles had from the propheſies of the Sibyls, which ſpake of a great

great king that was to appear in the world about that time. So Virgil tells us, that the time of Augustus was the utmost date of that prophesy:

Ultima Cumæi venit jam carminis ætas:

And Suetonius tells us, *that all over the eastern countries, there was an ancient and constant tradition, that such a prince should spring out of Judea:* And for this reason it is, that our SAVIOUR is call'd by the prophet, *the expectation of the nations.*

But more especially among the Jews, there was at that time a more lively and particular expectation, grounded upon the predictions of their prophets, of a prince whom they call'd the MESSIAS, or the anointed; and those who were more devout among them, did at that time wait for his appearance; as it is said of Simeon, that *he waited for the consolation of Israel.* Hence it was, that when John the baptist appeared in the quality of an extraordinary prophet, *they sent from Jerusalem to enquire whether he were the* MESSIAS? John i. 19. *The Jews sent priests and levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who art thou? and he confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the* CHRIST. The Sanhedrim, to whom it belonged to judge who were the true prophets, sent to know whether he was the MESSIAS or not? *he would not take this honour to himself*; but told them the MESSIAS was just at hand; and the next day, *when* JESUS *came to be baptized of him,* he bare record, *that he was the* SON *of* GOD, *and that he saw the* SPIRIT *descending and abiding upon him.*

So that it is plain that he knew him, and bare witness of him, which makes it the more strange that here the text, *he should send two of his disciples to enquire,* whether he were the MESSIAS or not? *art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* that is, art thou the MESSIAS, or not? for so he is call'd in the ancient prophesies of him, ὁ ἐρχόμενος, he that should come, Gen. xlix. 10. *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come.*

For

For the resolution of this difficulty, it is very probably said by interpreters, and I think there is no reason to doubt of it, that John the baptist did not send this message for his own satisfaction, but to satisfy his disciples, who were never very willing to acknowledge JESUS for the MESSIAS, because they thought he did shadow and cloud their master. From whence we may take notice, how men's judgments are apt to be perverted by faction and interest; and that good men are too prone to be swayed thereby; for such we suppose the disciples of John to have been; they will not believe their own master, when they apprehend him to speak against their interest; for they knew that they must rise and fall in their reputation and esteem, as their master did. They believed that their master was a prophet, and came from GOD; yet for all that, they could not digest his testimony of CHRIST, because that set him above their master; which they were sagacious enough to perceive, that it tended to the diminution and lessening of themselves. And that this was the thing which troubled them, appears plainly from the complaint which they make to their master, John iii. 26. *The disciples of John came to him and said, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.* That troubled them, to see him invade their master's office and that he began to have more followers than John had; *he baptizeth, and all men come to him.*

This prejudice John had endeavoured to root out of their minds, by telling them, that he had always declared that he was not the MESSIAS, ver 28. *Yea your selves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the* CHRIST, *but that I am sent before him.* But when he perceived it still to stick with them, and that they observed all his actions, and the miracles that he wrought, as if they had a mind to pick a quarrel with him (for St Luke, who relates the same story, tells us, that when our SAVIOUR had healed the centurion's servant, and raised from the dead the widow's son at Naim, the disciples of John shewed him all these things) I say, John

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Baptist perceiving that they watched him so narrowly, sent two of his disciples to him, that they might receive full satisfaction from him.

And St Luke tells us, that upon their coming to him, he wrought many of his miracles before them, to convince them that he was the true MESSIAS, Luke vii. 21, 22. *And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and of evil spirits; and to many that were blind he gave sight*; and then said to the disciples of John, *go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and to the poor the gospel is preached; and blessed is he that is not offended in me.*

So that you see that the reason why John Baptist sent to our SAVIOUR to know whether he was the MESSIAS, was not to satisfy himself, for he had no doubt of it; but perceiving his disciples to be ill-affected towards our SAVIOUR, and hearing them speak with some envy of his miracles, he sent them to him, that by seeing what he did, and hearing what account he gave of himself, they might receive full satisfaction concerning him.

I have been the longer in the clearing of this, that when upon every appearance of contradiction in the evangelical history, may not be too forward to suspect the truth of it; but may be convinc'd, that if they would but have patience to examine things carefully, they would find that the story does sufficiently vindicate itself; and tho' it be penn'd, with great simplicity, yet there is sufficient care taken, to free it from being guilty of any contradiction to itself.

The occasion of the words being thus cleared, there are in them these two things considerable.

First, what it was that John the baptist sent his disciples to be satisfied about; and that was, whether he was the MESSIAS or not? *now when John had heard in prison the works of* CHRIST, *he sent two of his disciples.* The circumstance of his being in prison, seems to be mention'd, to intimate to us the reason why he

did not come himself along with them; he sent two of his disciples to him, who said unto him, *art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* and then,

Secondly, the answer which our SAVIOUR returns to this message; JESUS *answered and said unto them, go and shew John again the things which ye do see and hear, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them; and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

So that these words contain, first, the evidence which our SAVIOUR gives of his being the true MESSIAS. Secondly, an intimation that notwithstanding all this evidence which he gave of himself, yet many would be offended at him, and reject him; *blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me.*

First, the evidence which our SAVIOUR gives of his being the true MESSIAS, and to prove this, there were but two things necessary.

1. To shew that he was sent by GOD, and had a particular commission from him.

2. That he was the very person of whom the prophets foretold that he should be the MESSIAS.

The first of these he proves by the miracles which he wrought; and the second, by the correspondency of the things he did, with what was foretold by the prophets concerning the MESSIAS; the prophesies concerning the MESSIAS were accomplish'd in him.

First, by the miracles which he wrought; *the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up.* Here is a brief enumeration of the several sorts of miracles which our SAVIOUR wrought, and these were a testimony to him that he came from GOD, and was sent and commissioned by him to declare his will to the world. So he himself tells us, John v. 39. *I have a greater witness than that of John, for the works which the* FATHER *hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the* FATHER *hath sent me.* Upon the evidence of these miracles, Ni-

dem

demus, a ruler among the Jews, was convinced that he was sent by GOD, John iii. 2. *We know that thou art a teacher come from* GOD, *for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except* GOD *be with him.* Nay his greatest enemies were afraid of his miracles, knowing how proper an argument they are to convince men, John xi. 47. when the chief priests and pharisees were met together in council against him, they concluded, that if he were permitted to go on and work miracles, he would draw all men after him. *What do we?* (say they) *for this man doth many miracles; if we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him.* This they said, upon occasion of the great miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead.

And in reason, miracles are the highest attestation that can be given to the truth and divinity of any doctrine; and supposing a doctrine not to be plainly unworthy of GOD, and contrary to those natural notions which men have of GOD and religion, we can have no greater evidence of the truth of it, than miracles; they are such an argument, as in it's own nature is apt to persuade and induce belief.

All truths do not need miracles; some are of easy belief, and are so clear by their own light, that they need neither miracle nor demonstration to prove them. Such are those self-evident principles which mankind do generally agree in; others which are not so evident by their own light, we are content to receive upon clear demonstration of them, or very probable arguments for them, without a miracle. And there are some truths, which however they may be sufficiently obscure and uncertain to most men, yet are they so inconsiderable, and of so small consequence, as not to deserve the attestation of miracles; so that there is no reason to expect that GOD should interpose by a miracle, to convince men of them.

Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit.

But for such truths as are necessary to be known by us, but are not sufficiently evident of themselves, nor capable of cogent evidence, especially to prejudiced and interested persons, GOD is pleased in this case many times to work miracles for our conviction; and they are a proper argument to convince us of a thing that is either in itself obscure and hard to be believed, or which we are prejudiced against, and hardly brought to believe; for they are an argument *à majori ad minus*, they prove a thing which is obscure and hard to be believed, by something that is more incredible, which yet they cannot deny because they see it done. Thus our SAVIOUR proves himself to be an extraordinary person, by *doing such things as never man did*; he convinceth them, that they ought to believe what he said, because they saw him do those things, which were harder to be believed (if one had not seen them) than what he said.

Miracles are indeed the greatest external confirmation and evidence that can be given to the truth of any doctrine, and where they are wrought with all the advantages they are capable of, they are an unquestionable demonstration of the truth of it; and such were our SAVIOUR's miracles here in the text, to prove that he was the true MESSIAS; here are miracles of all kinds, *the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up.* For the nature of them, they are such as are most likely to be divine and to come from GOD, for they were healing and beneficial to mankind. Our SAVIOUR here instanceth in those things which are of greatest benefit and advantage, and which free men from the greatest miseries and inconveniences; the restoring of sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf; soundness and health to the lame and the leprous, and life to the dead. And then for the number of them, they were many; not one instance of a kind, but several of every kind, and great multitudes of most of them; and for the manner of their operation, they were publick, in the sight and view of great multitudes of people

people; to free them from all suspicion of fraud and imposture, they were not wrought privately and in corners, and given out and noised abroad, but before all the people, so that every one might see them, and judge of them; not only among his own disciples and followers, as the Church of Rome pretends to work theirs, but among his enemies, *to convince those that did not believe*; and this not done once, and in one place, but at several times, and in all places where he came, and for a long time, for three years and a half, and after his death, he endowed his disciples and followers, with the same power, which lasted for some ages. And then for the quality of them, they were miracles of the greatest magnitude; those of them, which in themselves might have been performed by natural means, as healing the lame and the leprous, and the deaf, he did in a miraculous manner, by a word or a touch, yea, and many times at a great distance. But others were not only in the manner of their operation, but in the nature of the thing unquestionably miraculous, as giving of sight to those that had been born blind, and raising up the dead to life, as Lazarus, after he had lain in the grave four days; and himself afterwards, the third day after he had been buried; which, if there ever was or can be any unquestionable miracles in the world, ought certainly to be reputed such. So that our blessed SAVIOUR had all the attestation that miracles can give, that he came from GOD. And this is the first evidence of his being the MESSIAS.

The Jews acknowledge that the MESSIAS when he comes shall work great miracles; their own talmud confesseth, that JESUS *the son of Joseph and Mary did work great miracles*; and the history of the gospel does particularly relate more and greater miracles wrought by him, than by Moses and all the prophets that had been since the world began; so that we may still put the same question to the Jews, which they did in our SAVIOUR's time to one another; *when* CHRIST *cometh*, *will* then the MESSIAS whom ye expect comes,

will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

But, secondly, this will yet more clearly appear by the correspondency of the things here mentioned, with what was foretold by the prophets concerning the MESSIAS.

Not to mention innumerable circumstances of his birth, and life, and death, and resurrection, and ascension into heaven, together with the success and prevalency of his doctrine in the world, all which are punctually foretold by some or other of the prophets: I shall confine myself to the particulars here in the text.

First, it was foretold of the MESSIAS, that he should work miraculous cures. Isa. xxxv. 4, 5, 6. speaking of the MESSIAS, *he will come and save you; then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing*; this you see was fulfilled here in the text. 'Tis true indeed, the text mentions another miracle, which is not in the prophet, *that he raised the dead*; but if GOD did more than he promised and foretold, this is no prejudice to the argument, if all that he foretold was accomplished in him. Besides, the Jews have a proverb, that GOD is not content to perform barely what he promiseth, but *he usually doth something over and above his promise*. That the MESSIAS should *heal the blind, and the deaf and the lame*, Isaiah prophesied; and GOD makes good this promise and prediction to the full; the MESSIAS did not only do these, but, which is more and greater than any of these, *he raised the dead to life*.

Secondly, it was likewise foretold of the MESSIAS that he *should preach the gospel to the poor*, Isa. lxi. 1. *The* SPIRIT *of the* LORD GOD *is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek*, εὐαγγελίζεσθαι πτωχοῖς, *to preach the gospel or good tidings to the poor*; so the LXXII render the words, and they are the very words used by our SAVIOUR here in the text. 'Tis true indeed, this was no miracle, but

it was the punctual accomplishment of a prophesy concerning the MESSIAS, and consequently an evidence that he was the MESSIAS. But besides it had something in it which was very strange to the Jews, and very different from the way of their doctors and teachers; for the rabbies among the Jews would scarce instruct any but for great reward; they would meddle with none but those that were able to requite their pains; the ordinary and poorer sort of people they had in great contempt, as appears by that slighting expression of them, John vii. 48, 49. *Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed on him? but this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.* And Grotius upon this text tells us, that the Jewish masters had this foolish and insolent proverb among them, that *the* SPIRIT *of* GOD *doth not rest but upon a rich man,* to which this prediction concerning the MESSIAS was a direct contradiction: *The* SPIRIT *of the* LORD *is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.* In old time the prophets were especially sent to the kings and princes of the people: but this great prophet comes to *preach the gospel to the poor.* None have so little reason to be proud as the sons of men, but never was any so humble as the SON of GOD; our SAVIOUR's whole life and doctrine was a contradiction to the false opinions of the world; they thought the rich and great men of the world the only happy persons, but he came *to preach glad tidings to the poor,* to bring good news to them whom the great doctors of the law despised, and set at nought; and therefore to confound their pride and folly, and to confute their false opinions of things, he begins that excellent sermon of his with this saying, *Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of* GOD.

Thirdly, it was foretold of the MESSIAS, that the world should be offended at him, Isa. viii. 14. *He shall be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.* And Isa. liii. 1, 2, 3. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the* LORD *revealed? he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him;*

him; he is despised and rejected of men, and we hide as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not; and this likewise is intimated in the last words of the text, *and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* Intimating, that notwithstanding the great works that he did among them, which testified of him that he came from GOD, notwithstanding the predictions of their prophets concerning the MESSIAS, were so clearly and punctually accomplished in him; yet notwithstanding all this, they would take offence at him upon one account or other, and reject him and his doctrine; but even this, that they rejected him, and would not own him for their MESSIAS, was another sign or evidence that he was the true MESSIAS foretold by the prophets; for among other things this was expressly predicted concerning him, that he should be despised and rejected of men.

And thus I have done with the first thing I propounded to speak to; namely, the evidence which our SAVIOUR here gives of his being the true MESSIAS.

First, the many and great miracles which he wrought, prove that he came from GOD. And,

Secondly, the correspondence of the things he did, with what was foretold by the prophets concerning the MESSIAS, declare him to be the true MESSIAS.

I now proceed to the next thing I propounded to speak to, namely,

Secondly, an intimation in the text, that notwithstanding all the evidence CHRIST gave of himself, yet many would be offended at him, and reject him and his doctrine. In speaking to which, it will be very proper to consider,

First, how the poor came to be more disposed to receive the gospel than others.

Secondly, what those prejudices are which the world had against our SAVIOUR and his religion at it's first appearance, as also those which men have at this day against the Christian religion, and to endeavour to shew the unreasonableness of them.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, how happy a thing it is to escape and overcome the common prejudices which men have against religion.

First, how the poor came to be more disposed to receive the gospel than others; *the poor have the gospel preached unto them.* Which does not only signify that our SAVIOUR did more especially apply himself to them, but likewise that they were in a nearer disposition to receive it, and did of all others give the most ready entertainment to his doctrine: and this our SAVIOUR declares to us in the beginning of his sermon upon the mount, when he pronounceth the poor blessed upon this account, because they were nearer to the kingdom of GOD than others; *blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of* GOD. So likewise St James, chap. ii. ver. 5. *Hath not* GOD *chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?* So that it seems the poor were upon some account or other in a nearer disposition to receive the gospel, than the great and rich men of this world. And of this there are three accounts to be given.

First, the poor had no earthly interest to engage them to reject our SAVIOUR and his doctrine. The high priests, and scribes, and pharisees among the Jews, they had a plain worldly interest which did engage them to oppose our SAVIOUR and his doctrine; for if he were received for the MESSIAS, and his doctrine embraced, they must of necessity lose their sway and authority among the people; and all that which rendered them so considerable, their pretended skill in the law, and in the traditions and observances of their fathers, together with their external shews of piety and devotion, would signify nothing, if our SAVIOUR and his doctrine should take place. And there are very few so honest and sincere, as to be content for truth's sake, to part with their reputation and authority, and to become less in the esteem of men than they were before. Few are so impartial as to quit those things which they once had laid great weight upon, and kept a great stir about,

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because this is to acknowledge that they were in an error, and mistaken in their zeal, which few have the ingenuity to own, tho' it be never so plain to others; and therefore it is no wonder that our SAVIOUR's doctrine met with so much resistance from those, who were so much concerned in point of honour and reputation, to make head against it. And this account our SAVIOUR himself gives us of their infidelity, John v. 44. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh of* GOD *only?* And chap. xii. 43. *For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of* GOD.

And besides the point of reputation, those that were rich, were concerned in point of interest, to oppose our SAVIOUR and his doctrine; because he called upon men *to deny themselves, and to part with houses and lands, yea, and life itself, for his sake, and for the gospel's*, which must needs be a very hard and unpleasant doctrine to rich men, who had great estates, and had set their hearts upon them. Upon this account it is that our SAVIOUR pronounceth it so *hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of* GOD; and compares it with those things that are most difficult, and humanly impossible; *I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of* GOD.

But now the poor were free from these incumbrances and temptations; they had nothing to lose, and therefore our SAVIOUR's doctrine went down more easily with them; because it did not contradict their interest as it did the interest of those who had great estates and possessions.

Secondly, Another reason of this is, that those that are poor, and enjoy little of the good things of this life, are willing to entertain good news of happiness in another. Those who are in a state of present misery and suffering are glad to hear that it shall be well with them hereafter, and are willing to listen to the good news of a future happiness; and therefore our SAVIOUR, when he first pronounced the *poor blessed*, Luke vi. 20. adds by way

of opposition, ver. 24. *But wo unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation.* They were in so comfortable a condition at present, that they were not much concerned what should become of them hereafter; whereas all the comfort that poor men have, is the hopes of a better condition, *non si malè nunc, & olim sic erit*, that *if it be bad now, it will not be so always*; and therefore no wonder if the promises and assurance of a future happiness be very welcome to them.

Thirdly, if by the poor we do not only understand those who are in a low and mean condition as to the things of this world, but such likewise as had a temper and disposition of mind suitable to the poverty of their outward condition, which our SAVIOUR calls *poverty of spirit*, by which he means *meekness and humility*; there is no doubt but that such a frame and temper of spirit is a great disposition to the receiving of truth. And that this is included in the notion of poverty, is very plain, both from the words of the prophesy I cited before, Isa. lxi. 1. *The* SPIRIT *of the* LORD *is upon me, because the* LORD *hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, and to bind up the broken-hearted*; and likewise from our SAVIOUR's description of these persons, in one of the evangelists, Matth. v. 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of* GOD. So that by the poor who are so nearly disposed to receive the gospel, our SAVIOUR intended those, who, being in a poor and low condition in respect of outward things, were likewise meek and humble in their spirits. For meekness and humility are great dispositions to the entertaining of truth. These graces and virtues do prepare the minds of men for learning and instruction; for meekness and modesty, and humility, are the proper dispositions of a scholar. He that hath a mean opinion of himself is ready to learn of others; he, who is not guided by pride or passion, is more apt to consider things impartially, and to pass a truer judgment upon them, than the proud and passionate. Passion and pride are great obstacles to the receiving of truth, and to our improvement in knowledge. Passion does not only

darken

darken the minds of men, but puts a false bias upon our judgments, which draws them off many times from truth, and sways them that way to which our passion inclines them. A man of a calm and meek temper stands always indifferent for the receiving of truth, and holds the balance of his judgment even; but passion sways and inclines it one way, and that commonly against truth and reason. So likewise pride is a great impediment to knowledge, and the very worst quality that a learner can have, it obstructs all the passages whereby knowledge should enter into us, it makes men refuse instruction, out of a conceit they need it not. Many men might have known more, had it not been for the vain opinion which they have entertained of the sufficiency of their knowledge. This is true in all kinds of learning, but more especially as to the knowledge of divine things. For GOD loves to communicate himself, and bestow his grace and wisdom upon meek and humble minds. So the Scripture tells us, Psal. xxv. 9. *The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.* And 1 Pet. v. 5. *Be clothed with humility; for* GOD *resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

And thus I have shewn in what respects the people were more disposed for the receiving the gospel, than others. I now proceed to the

Second thing, namely, what those prejudices and objections are, which the world had against our SAVIOUR and his religion at their first appearance; as also to enquire into those which men have at this day against the Christian religion, and to shew the weakness and unreasonableness of them. I begin,

First, with those prejudices which the world had against our SAVIOUR and his religion at their first appearance.

Both Jews and Gentiles were offended at him and his doctrine; but not both upon the same account. They both took exceptions at him, especially at his low and suffering condition; but not both upon the same reason. I shall begin with the exceptions which the Jew

Jews took against our blessed SAVIOUR and his religion; and I shall reduce them all, or at least the most considerable of them (as I find dispersed in the history of the gospel, and in the Acts of the apostles) to these six heads.

First, the exceptions which they took against him upon account of his extraction and original.

Secondly, at the meanness of his condition, contrary to their universal expectation.

Thirdly, as to his miracles.

Fourthly, his conversation.

Fifthly, the prejudice that lay against him from the opposition that was made by persons of the greatest knowledge and authority among them. And,

Lastly, that the religion which he endeavoured to introduce, did abolish and supersede their ancient religion, as of no longer use and continuance, though it was plain it was at first instituted by GOD.

First, the exceptions which they took at his extraction and original. In relation to this they were offended at three things.

1. That his original was known among them. This you find urged against him, John vii. 27. *We know this man whence he is, but when the* MESSIAS *comes, no man knows whence he is.*

This to be sure was no just exception in reason against him. For what if his extraction were known, might he not be from GOD for all that? They owned Moses for the greatest prophet that ever was, and yet it was very well known from whence he was.

But they seem to refer to some prophesy of the Old Testament, which did seem to assert so much. If they meant that his extraction shou'd be altogether unknown; they knew very well, and believed the contrary, that *he was to be of the line of David, and to come out of Bethlehem.* If they referred to that prophesy, that *a virgin should conceive and bear a son*, and so understood that he should be without father; this was really true, tho' they thought that he was the son of Joseph. And if he affirmed that he had no father, he did sufficiently justify it by his miracles; that being as easy to be be-

lieved possible by a divine power, as the miracles which he wrought; which yet they could not deny, because they saw them.

2. Another prejudice against his extraction, was the meanness of his parents and breeding. This you find mentioned, Matth. xiii. 54, 55. *Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary; and his brethren James and Joses, and Simon and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? whence then hath this man these things? and they were offended in him.* And so likewise, John vii. 15. *How knoweth this man letters, having never learned.*

A strange prejudice and most unreasonable. They could not believe him to be an extraordinary person, because his parents and relations, his birth and breeding, were so mean. He had been brought up to a trade, and not brought up to learning: whereas in reason, this ought to have been an argument just the other way; that he was an extraordinary person, and divinely assisted, who all on the sudden, without the help and assistance of education, gave such evidence of his great wisdom and knowledge, and did such mighty works. This could not be imputed to his breeding, for that was mean; therefore there must be something extraordinary and divine in it. Thus another man who had been free from prejudice would have reasoned.

3. The most unreasonable prejudice of all, in respect of his extraction. was grounded upon a spiteful and malicious proverb, concerning the country where our SAVIOUR was brought up, and they supposed him to be born; and that was Galilee, John i. 46. *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* And John vii. 41. *Shall the* MESSIAS *come out of Galilee?* And ver. 52. *Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*

But it seems Nathanael, who was a good man, was easily taken off from this common prejudice, when Philip said to him, *come and see.* He bids him come and see the works he did, and then refers it to him, whether he would believe his own eyes, or an old proverb;

however

however it seems the Jews laid great weight upon it, as if this alone were enough to confute all his miracles, and after they had shot this bolt at him, the business were concluded clearly against him. But prudent and considerate men do not use to give much credit to ill-natured proverbs; the good or bad characters which are given of countries are not understood to be universally true, and without exception. There is no place but hath brought forth some brave spirits, and excellent persons; whatever the general temper and disposition of the inhabitants may be. Among the Grecians, the Bœotians were esteemed a dull people, even to a proverb; and yet Pindar, one of their chief poets, was one of them. The Scythians were a barbarous nation, and one would have thought no good could have come from hence; and yet that country yielded Anacharsis an eminent philosopher. The Idumeans were aliens, and strangers to the covenant; and yet Job, one of the best men that ever was, came from thence. GOD can raise up eminent persons from any place; Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and an idolatrous people. Nay, as our SAVIOUR tells us, *he can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham.* The wise GOD, in the government of the world, does not tie himself to our foolish proverbs. It is not necessary to make a man a prophet, that he should be bred in a good air. If GOD sends a man, it matters not from what place he comes.

Secondly, another head of exception against our SAVIOUR, was the meanness of his outward condition, so contrary to the universal expectation of the Jews. The Jews, from the tradition of their fathers, to which they (as the Church of Rome does at this day) paid a greater reverence than to the written word of GOD, were possessed with a strong persuasion, that the MESSIAS, whom they expected, was to be a great prince and conqueror, and to subdue all nations to them; so that nothing could be a greater defeat to their expectations, than the mean and low condition, in which our SAVIOUR appeared; so that upon this account they were almost universally offended at him.

But this prejudice was very unreasonable. For neither did their prophets foretel any such thing, as the temporal greatness of the MESSIAS: but on the contrary most expressly, that *he should be despised and rejected of men*, that *he should be a man of sorrows and sufferings*, and at last, *be put to death*; which was directly contrary to what they expected from their ill-grounded tradition.

Thirdly, against his miracles they made these two exceptions:

1. That he wrought them by magical skill, and by the power of the devil.

Which was so exorbitantly unreasonable and malicious, that our SAVIOUR pronounceth it to be an *unpardonable sin*, and for answer to it, appeals to every man's reason, whether it was likely *that the devil should conspire against himself, and assist any man to overthrow his own kingdom?* for it was plain, our SAVIOUR's doctrine was directly contrary to the devil's design; and therefore to assist him to work miracles for the confirmation of it, must have been apparently against his own interest, and to the ruin of his own kingdom.

2. They pretended that though he did many great works, yet he gave them no sign from heaven. Matth. xvi. 1. It is said, *they desired him to shew them a sign from heaven.* It seems they expected that GOD should give some immediate testimony to him from heaven; as he did to Elias, when fire came down from heaven, and consumed his enemies; and particularly they expected, that when he was upon the cross, if he were the true MESSIAS, he should have come down and saved himself: and because he did not answer their expectation in this, they concluded him an impostor.

Now what could be more unreasonable? when he had wrought so many other, and great miracles, perversly to insist upon some particular kind of miracle which they fancied? as if GOD were bound to gratify the curiosity of men; and as if our SAVIOUR were not as much *declared to be the* SON *of* GOD, *by rising again from the dead*, as if he had *come down from the cross.*

Fourthly

Fourthly, as to his conversation, they had these three exceptions:

1. That he used no severity in his habit or diet, took too much freedom, as they thought; *came eating and drinking*; that is, he freely used the creatures of GOD, for the end for which they were given, with temperance and thanksgiving; and did not lay those rigorous restraints upon himself in these matters, which many, that were esteemed the most religious among them, used to do.

But he plainly shews them, that this exception was merely out of their prejudice against him. For if he had come in the way of austerity, they would have rejected him as well. They were resolved to find fault with him whatever he did. Matth. xi. 16. *Whereunto shall I liken this generation? John the baptist came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a devil.* He lived in a more austere and melancholy way, *he came in the way of righteousness*, used great strictness and severity in his habit and diet, and this they took exception at. Our SAVIOUR was of a quite contrary temper, and that did not please them neither. *The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold a wine-bibber, and a glutton.* So that let our SAVIOUR have done what he would, he could not have carried himself so, as to have escaped the censures of men, so peevishly and perversly disposed.

2. That he kept company with publicans and sinners.

To which exception nothing can be more reasonable than our SAVIOUR's own answer; that he was sent to be a physician to the world, *to call sinners to repentance*; and therefore they had no reason to be angry, or think it strange, if he conversed with his patients among whom his proper employment lay.

3. They objected to him profaneness in breaking the sabbath. and that surely was plain, that *he could not be* GOD, *if he kept not the sabbath-day*. The truth was, he had healed one on the sabbath-day.

To this our SAVIOUR gives a most reasonable and satisfactory answer, that surely *it was lawful to do good on the sabbath-day*; that that was but a positive institution, but works of mercy are natural and moral duties; and GOD himself had declared, that he would have even his own institutions to give way to those greater duties, that are of natural and eternal obligation. *I will have mercy and not sacrifice.* And then from the end of the sabbath; the sabbath was made for the rest and refreshment of man; and therefore could not be presumed to be intended to his prejudice. *The sabbath was made for man: and not man for the sabbath.*

Fifthly, another great prejudice against him, was that persons of the greatest knowledge and authority among them, did not embrace his doctrine. John vii. 48. *Have any of the rulers or pharisees believed on him?* So that here was the infallible rule and authority of their church against him.

There is no doubt, but the example and authority of our guides ought to sway very much with us, and overrule us in doubtful cases; but not against plain and convincing evidence; there we ought to follow, *and obey* GOD *rather than men.* There is sometimes a visible and palpable corruption in those who are to lead us; they may have an interest to oppose the truth: and thus it was with the pharisees and rulers at that time; and so it hath been among Christians in the great degeneracy of the Roman Church. The Christian religion was never more endangered, nor ever more corrupted, than by those who have been in greatest authority in that church who ought to have understood religion best, and have been the principal support of it. *Men may err: but* GOD *cannot.* So that when GOD sends a prophet, or by his word does plainly declare his will to us, human example and authority ceaseth, and is of no force.

The last prejudice I shall mention, which the Jews had against our SAVIOUR and his doctrine, was, that he did abolish and supersede their religion, as of no longer use and continuance; though it was plain it was instituted by GOD.

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This had been a very specious pretence indeed, had not this been part of their religion, and had not their own prophets foretold, that the MESSIAS should come and perfect what was wanting and defective in their institution. It is expressly said in their law, *that* GOD *would raise unto them another prophet, like to Moses, and that they should hear him,* when he came. So that in truth it was the accomplishment of all those revelations which were made to the Jews, and did not reprove the Jewish religion as false, but as imperfect: and did not contradict and overthrow; but *perfect and fulfil the law and the prophets.*

And thus I have gone over the chief exceptions and offences which the Jews took at our SAVIOUR and his doctrine; and I hope sufficiently shewn the unreasonableness of them. I have not now time to proceed to what remains: but by what hath been said, you may easily see, upon what slight and unreasonable grounds men may be prejudiced against the best person and things, and yet be very confident all the while that they are in the right. For so no doubt many of the Jews, who opposed our SAVIOUR and his doctrine, thought themselves to be. Therefore it concerns us to put on meekness, and humility, and modesty, that we may be able to judge impartially of things, and our minds may be preserved free and indifferent to receive the truths of GOD, when they are offered to us: otherwise self-conceit and passion will so blind our minds, and bias our judgments, that we shall be unable to discern, and unwilling to entertain, the plainest and most evident truths. We see here by the sad example of the Jews, that by giving way to passion, and cherishing pride and self-conceit, men may be so deeply prejudiced against the truth, as to resist the clearest light, and reject even salvation itself, when it is offered to them. So that it is not in vain, that the Scripture saith, *let every man be swift to hear, and slow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of* GOD; and exhorts us so meekly, *to receive with meekness the word of* GOD, *which is able to save our souls.*

SERMON

SERMON CXVIII.

The prejudices againſt Chriſtianity conſidered.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

MATTH. xi. 6.

And bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.

I Have from theſe words propounded to conſider two things:

I. Thoſe prejudices and objections which the world had againſt our SAVIOUR and his religion at their firſt appearance; as alſo to enquire into thoſe which men at this day do more eſpecially inſiſt upon, againſt the Chriſtian religion; and to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of them.

II. How happy a thing it is to eſcape and overcome the common prejudices which men have againſt religion.

I have entered upon the firſt of theſe, the prejudices which the world had againſt our SAVIOUR and his religion. When this great teacher of mankind came from GOD, though he gave all imaginable teſtimony and evidence that he was ſent from heaven; yet the greateſt part of the world, both Jews and Gentiles, were mightily offended at him, and deeply prejudiced againſt him and his doctrine; but not both upon the ſame account.

I have already given you an account of the chief exceptions which the Jews made againſt our SAVIOUR and his doctrine, and have ſhewn the unreaſonableneſs of them.

I proceed

I proceed now to consider the principal of those exceptions, which the Gentiles and heathen philosophers, took at our SAVIOUR and his doctrine. I shall mention these four.

First, that Christianity was a great innovation, and contrary to the received institutions of the world.

Secondly, they objected against the plainness and simplicity of the doctrine.

Thirdly, that it wanted demonstration.

Fourthly, that the low and suffering condition of our SAVIOUR was unsuitable to one that pretended to be the SON of GOD, and to be appointed by him for a teacher and reformer of the world. These are the chief exceptions which the heathen, and especially their philosophers, took at our SAVIOUR and his doctrine.

First, that the Christian religion was a great innovation, and contrary to the received institutions of the world; and consequently that it did condemn the religion which had been so universally received and establish'd in the world by so long a continuance of time. And no wonder if this made a great impression upon them, and raised a mighty prejudice in the minds of men against the Christian religion; no prejudices being so strong as those that are fix'd in the minds of men by education: and of all the prejudices of education, none so violent and hard to be removed, as those about religion, yea though they be never so groundless and unreasonable. *Hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods?* intimating to us, that men are very hardly brought off from that religion which they have been brought up in, how absurd soever it be. When Christianity was first propounded to the heathen world, had men been free and indifferent, and not prepossess'd with other apprehensions of GOD and religion; it might then have been expected from them, that they should have entertain'd it with a readiness of mind proportionable to the reasonableness of it. But the case was quite otherwise, the world had for many ages been brought up to another way of worship, and inur'd to rites and superstitions of a quite different nature. And this sways very much with

with men; *sequimur majores nostros, qui feliciter sequuti sunt suos*; as one of the heathens said in those days, *we follow our ancestors, who happily follow'd theirs*; men are hardly brought to condemn those opinions and customs in religion, which themselves and their forefathers have always embraced and followed. And wise men especially are loth to admit so great a change in a matter of so great a concernment as religion is. So that this must be acknowledged to have been a considerable prejudice against the Christian religion at it's first appearance. But yet upon a thorough examination, this will not be found sufficient in reason to withhold men from embracing Christianity, if we consider these four things.

1. No prudent person thinks, that the example and custom of his forefathers obligeth him to that which is evil in itself, and pernicious to him that does it; and there is no evil, no danger equal to that of a false religion, for that tends to the ruin of men's souls, and their undoing for ever. A man might better alledge the example of his forefathers to justify his errors and follies in any other kind, than in this, which is so infinitely pernicious in the consequences of it.

2. In a great corruption and degeneracy, it is no sufficient reason against a reformation, that it makes a change. When things are amiss, it is always fit to amend and reform them; and this cannot be done without a change. The wisest among the heathens did acknowledge, that their religion was mixt with very great follies and superstitions, and that the lives and manners of men were extremely corrupt and degenerate; and they endeavour'd, as much as they could, and durst, to reform these things. And therefore there was no reason to oppose an effectual reformation, for fear of a change; a change of things for the better, tho' it be usually hard to be effected, being always a thing to be desired and wished for.

3. The change which Christianity design'd, was the least liable to exception that could be, being nothing else in the main of it, but the reducing of natural religion, the bringing of men back to such apprehensi

of GOD, and such a way of worshipping him, as was most suitable to the divine nature, and to the natural notions of men's minds; nothing else but a design to perswade men of the one true GOD, maker of the world, that he is a spirit, and to be worshipped in such a manner as is suitable to his spiritual nature. And then for matters of practice, to bring men to the obedience of those precepts of temperance, and justice, and charity, which had been universally acknowledged, even by the heathens themselves, to be the great duties which men owe to themselves and others. And that this was the main design of the Christian religion, the apostle hath told us in most plain expres words, Tit. ii. 11, 12. *The grace of* GOD, (that is the doctrine of the gospel) *which hath appeared to all men, and brings salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.*

And all that the Christian religion adds beyond this, are means and helps for our direction, and assistance, and encouragement in the discharge and performance of these duties. For our direction, GOD hath sent his SON in our nature, to declare his will to us, and to be a pattern of holiness and virtue. For our assistance, he hath promised the aids of his HOLY SPIRIT; and for our encouragement, he offers to us pardon of sin in the blood of his SON, and eternal life and happiness in the other world. This is a short sum and abridgment of the Christian religion, and there is nothing of all this that can reasonably be excepted against.

2. GOD, considering the prejudice of the heathens against Christianity, by reason of their education in a contrary religion, was strong and violent, was pleased to give such evidence of the truth of Christianity, as was of proportionable strength and force to remove and conquer this prejudice. He was pleased to give testimony to the first founder of this religion by mighty miracles, and particularly by his resurrection from the dead: but because the report of these things was only brought to the heathen world, and they had not seen

this,

the things themſelves; therefore he enabled thoſe who were the witneſſes of theſe things to the world, to work as great miracles as he had done. And when they ſaw thoſe who gave teſtimony to our SAVIOUR's miracles, do as great and ſtrange things themſelves, as they teſtified of him, there was no reaſon any longer to doubt of the truth of their teſtimony. So that though the prejudice of the heathen againſt Chriſtianity was very great, yet the evidence which GOD gave to it, was ſtrong enough to remove it. The doctrine of Chriſtianity was ſuch as might have recommended itſelf to impartial men, by it's own reaſonableneſs: but meeting with violent prejudices in thoſe to whom it was offered, GOD was pleaſed to give ſuch a confirmation to it, as was ſufficient to bear down thoſe prejudices.

Secondly, another objection againſt Chriſtianity, was the plainneſs and ſimplicity of the doctrine. They expected ſome deep ſpeculations in natural or moral philoſophy; they made full account, a teacher ſent from heaven would have inſtructed them in the profoundeſt points, and diſcourſed to them about the firſt principles of things, and the nature of the ſoul, and the chief end of man, with a ſubtilty and eloquence infinitely beyond that of their greateſt ſophiſters, and able to bear down all oppoſition and contradiction: but inſtead of this they are told a plain ſtory of the life and miracles of JESUS CHRIST, and of his dying upon the croſs, and riſing from the dead, and aſcending into heaven; and a few plain precepts of life; and all this deliver'd without any ornaments of art, or inſinuation of eloquence to gain the favour and applauſe of thoſe to whom they related theſe things.

But now, this truly conſidered, is ſo far from being any real objection againſt the Chriſtian doctrine, that it is one of the greateſt commendations that can be given of it: for matter of fact ought to be related in the moſt plain, and ſimple, and unaffected manner; and the leſs art and eloquence is uſed in the telling of a ſtory the more likely it is to gain belief. And as for our SAVIOUR's precepts how plain ſoever they might be

I am ſure they are a collection of the moſt excellent and reaſonable rules of a good life, and the freeſt from all vanity and folly, that are to be met with in any book in the world. And can any thing be more worthy of GOD, and more likely to proceed from him, than ſo plain and uſeful a doctrine as this? The language of law is not wont to be fine and perſuaſive, but ſhort, and full of authority. Thus it is among men: and ſurely it is much fitter for GOD to ſpeak thus to men, than for men to one another.

Thirdly, it is objected, that the doctrine of our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles wanted demonſtration; they ſeemed to impoſe too much upon the underſtandings of men, and to deliver things too magiſterially, not demonſtrating things from intrinſical arguments, but requiring belief and aſſent without proof.

This the apoſtle St Paul readily acknowledgeth, that in preaching the goſpel to the world, they did not proceed in the way of the heathen orators and philoſophers, 1 Cor. iv. 4. *My ſpeech and my preaching was not in the inticing words of man's wiſdom: but in demonſtration of the* SPIRIT *and of power*; that is, they did not go in the way of human eloquence and demonſtration: but yet their doctrine did not want it's evidence and demonſtration, though of another kind. They did not go about to bewitch men by eloquence, not to entangle their minds by ſubtle reaſonings, the force of which very few are capable of: but they offered to men a ſenſible proof and demonſtration of the truth of what they delivered, in thoſe ſtrange and miraculous operations, to which they were enabled by the HOLY GHOST. And this was a ſenſible evidence, even to the meaneſt capacity, of a divine aſſiſtance going along with them, and giving teſtimony to them. I appeal to any man, whether the reſurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead, and his aſcending into heaven, be not a clearer demonſtration of another life after this, and more level to the capacities of all mankind, than the fineſt and ſubtileſt arguments that can be drawn from the immaterial nature of the ſoul, it's power of reflection upon

itſelf, and independency upon body as to ſome of it's operations; which yet are ſome of the chiefeſt arguments that philoſophy affords, to prove the immortality of our ſouls.

Fourthly, the heathens objected, that the low and mean condition of our SAVIOUR was unſuitable to one that pretended to be the SON of GOD, and to be appointed by GOD to be a teacher and reformer of the world. This to the heathen philoſophers did not only appear unreaſonable, but even ridiculous. So St Paul tells us, 1 Cor. i. 23. *We preach* CHRIST *crucified, to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishneſs*: to think that a man, who appeared in ſuch mean circumſtances, ſhould be fit to reform the world; and one, who himſelf was put to death, ſhould be relied upon for life and immortality.

This objection I have heretofore conſidered at large, and therefore ſhall now ſpeak but very briefly to it.

Beſides thoſe excellent reaſons and ends which the Scripture aſſigns of our SAVIOUR's humiliation; as that he might be a teacher and example to us; that he might make expiation for our ſins; that by ſuffering himſelf, he might learn to commiſerate us; that *by death he might deſtroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and might deliver thoſe who through fear of death were all their lives ſubject to bondage*; I ſay, beſides theſe, it was of great uſe that he ſhould live in ſo mean and afflicted a condition, to confront the pride, and vanity and fantaſtry of the world; and to convince men of theſe two great truths, that GOD may love thoſe whom he afflicts; and that men may be innocent, and virtuous, and contented in the midſt of poverty, and reproach, and ſuffering. Had our bleſſed SAVIOUR been a great temporal prince, his influence and example might poſſibly have made more hypocrites and ſervile converts; but would not have perſuaded men one jot more to be inwardly good and virtuous. The great argument which muſt do that, muſt be fetched, not from the pomp and proſperity of this world, but from the eternal happineſs and miſery

of the other. Beſides, had he appeared in any great power and ſplendor, the Chriſtian religion could not have been ſo clearly acquitted from the ſuſpicion of a worldly intereſt and deſign, which would have been a far greater objection againſt it, than this which I am now ſpeaking to.

Add to all this, that the wiſeſt of the heathen philoſophers did teach, that worldly greatneſs and power are not to be admired, but deſpiſed by a truly wiſe man; that men may be virtuous, and good, and dearly beloved of GOD, and yet be liable to great miſeries and ſufferings; and that whoever ſuffers unjuſtly, and bears it patiently, gives the greateſt teſtimony to goodneſs, and does moſt effectually recommend virtue to the world; that a good man under the hardeſt circumſtances of miſery, and reproach, and ſuffering, is the fitteſt perſon of all other to be the miniſter, and apoſtle, and preacher of GOD to mankind: and ſurely they who ſay ſuch things (which the Heathens have done) had no reaſon to object to our bleſſed SAVIOUR his low and ſuffering condition.

As to that part of the objection, that he who promiſed immortality to others could not ſave himſelf from death and ſuffering, conſidering that he who was put to death, reſcued himſelf from the power of the grave: it is ſo far from being ridiculous, that nothing can be more reaſonable than to rely upon him for our hopes of immortality, who by riſing from the grave, and conquering death, gave a plain demonſtration that he was able to make good what he promiſed.

I have done with the exceptions which were made againſt our SAVIOUR and his doctrine at their firſt appearance in the world. I proceed in the

IId Place to conſider the prejudices and objections which men at this day do more particularly inſiſt upon, againſt our SAVIOUR and his religion: and they are many.

Firſt, ſome that relate to the incarnation of our SAVIOUR.

Secondly, to the time of his appearance.

Thirdly, that we have not now ſufficient evidence of the truth of Chriſtianity; the main arguments for it relying upon matters of fact, of which, at this diſtance, we have not, nor can be expected to have, ſufficient aſſurance.

Fourthly, that the terms of it ſeem very hard, and to lay too great reſtraints upon human nature.

Fifthly, that it is apt to diſpirit men, and to break the vigour and courage of their minds.

Sixthly, the diviſions and factions that are among Chriſtians.

Seventhly, the wicked lives of the greateſt part of the profeſſors of Chriſtianity. In anſwer to all which, I do not propoſe to ſay all that may be ſaid, but as briefly as I can to offer ſo much, as may, if not give full ſatisfaction, yet be ſufficient to break the force of them, and to free the minds of men from any great perplexity about them.

As to the firſt, which relates to the incarnation of our SAVIOUR; and the ſecond to the time of his appearance; I know that theſe, and moſt of the reſt I have mentioned, were urged by the Heathen againſt Chriſtianity: but they are now more eſpecially inſiſted upon both by the ſecret and open enemies of our religion.

The objections againſt his incarnation I have elſewhere *(a)* conſidered: and therefore ſhall proceed to the next, viz.

Secondly, as to the time of our SAVIOUR's appearance, it is objected, if he be the only way and means of ſalvation, why did he come no ſooner into the world; but ſuffer mankind ſo long without any hope or means of being ſaved? This was objected by Porphyry of old, and ſtill ſticks in the minds of men. To this I anſwer.

1. It is not fit for creatures to call their Creator to too ſtrict an account of his actions. Goodneſs is free and may act when and how it pleaſeth; and *as God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy*, ſo

(a) John i. 14. *Sermon* xl. iii.

may have mercy at what time he pleaſeth, and is not bound to give us an account of his matters. This is much like the objection of the atheiſt againſt the being of GOD; that if there were ſuch an infinite and eternal being, he would ſurely have made the world ſooner, and not have been without all employment for ſo long a duration: ſuch another objection is this againſt our SAVIOUR, that if he had been the SON of GOD, he would have begun this great and merciful work of the redemption of mankind ſooner, and not have delayed it ſo long, and ſuffered mankind to periſh for four thouſand years together.

But it ſeems in the one as well as the other, GOD took his own time, and he beſt knew what time was fitteſt. The Scripture tells us, that *in the fulneſs of time*, GOD *ſent his* SON: when things were ripe for it, and all things accompliſhed that GOD thought requiſite in order to it. In judging of the actions of our earthly governors, thoſe who are at a diſtance from their counſels, what conjectures ſoever they make of the reaſons of them, will nevertheleſs, if they have that reſpect for their wiſdom which they ought, believe, that how ſtrange ſoever ſome of their actions may ſeem, yet they were done upon good reaſon, and that they themſelves, if they knew the ſecrets of their counſels, ſhould think ſo. Much more do we owe that reverence to the infinite wiſdom of GOD, to believe that the counſels of his will are grounded upon very good reaſon, tho' we do not ſee many times what it is.

2. It is not true that the world was wholly deſtitute of a way and means of ſalvation before our SAVIOUR'S coming. Before the law of Moſes was given, men were capable of being received to the mercy and favour of GOD, upon their obedience to the law of nature, and their ſincere repentance for the violation of it, by virtue of *the lamb that was ſlain from the foundation of the world*. Men were ſaved by CHRIST both before and under the law, without any particular and expreſs knowledge of him, There were good men in other nations, as well as among the Jews, as Job, and his

friends alſo, ſeem to have been. In all ages of the world, and *in every nation, they that feared* GOD *and wrought righteouſneſs were accepted of him.* The ſacrifice of CHRIST, which is the meritorious cauſe of the ſalvation of mankind, looks back as well as forward; and GOD was reconcilable to men, and their ſins were pardoned, by virtue of this great propitiation that was to be made. In which ſenſe perhaps it is, that CHRIST is ſaid to be *the lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world,* Heb. ix. 25, 26. The apoſtle intimates to us, that if this ſacrifice, which was offered in the laſt ages of the world, had not been available in former ages, CHRIST *muſt have often ſuffered ſince the foundation of the world: but now hath he appeared once in the concluſion of the ages, to put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.*

3. He did appear at that time in which the world ſtood moſt in need of him; when the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles, were ſunk into the greateſt degeneracy, both in opinion and practice, and the condition of mankind ſeemed to be even deſperate and paſt remedy. This was the needful time, when it was moſt ſeaſonable for this great phyſician to come, and ſhew his pity and his ſkill in our recovery. GOD could have ſent his SON many ages before; but he thought fit to try other ways firſt, and to reſerve this powerful remedy to the laſt; *laſt of all he ſent his* SON.

4. The time of our SAVIOUR's appearing was of all ages of the world the fitteſt ſeaſon for his coming; whether we conſider,

1. That the world was at that time beſt prepared and diſpoſed for receiving the Chriſtian religion: or,

2. That this was the fitteſt ſeaſon that ever had been, for the eaſy diffuſing and propagating of this religion. I aſſign theſe reaſons as tending to give men ſome ſatisfaction, why this great bleſſing was delayed ſo long; it being rather an argument of wiſdom and goodneſs, than of the want of either, to defer things to that time, in which they are moſt likely to have their effect. Not but that perhaps other and better reaſons may be given.

given. To be sure GOD had very good reasons for this dispensation, whether we can hit upon them or not. In the mean time these seem not to be altogether inconsiderable.

1. That the world was at that time best prepared and disposed for receiving the Christian religion. All the while our SAVIOUR's coming was delayed, GOD's providence was disposing things for it, and training up mankind for the entertaining of this great blessing. The Jewish religion was always very burdensom, but much more towards the expiration of the Jewish state, partly by the intolerable multitude of external observances, which were daily multiplied upon them, under pretence of traditions from their fathers; and partly by reason of their subjection to the Romans, which made the exercise of their religion in many respects more difficult.

And the Heathen world was in a very good measure prepared for Christianity, by being civilized. About the time of our SAVIOUR's coming into the world, philosophy and learning had been so diffused by the Roman conquests, as had brought a great part of the world from barbarism to civility. Besides that their philosophy had this effect upon men, to refine their reason, and in a good degree to detect the follies of the Heathen idolatry and superstition.

'Tis true indeed learning and philosophy flourished a great while before, in the time of the Grecian empire, and perhaps before that in some other nations; and the conquests of the Grecians were very speedy, and of vast extent: but yet they were neither so universal, nor so well settled; nor did they propagate their philosophy and civility together with their conquests, as the Romans did. So that there were no ages of the world, wherein mankind were so generally prepared and disposed for the receiving of the gospel, as that wherein our SAVIOUR appeared.

2. This was likewise the fittest season for the easy diffusing and propagating of the Christian religion. The Romans, together with their conquests, did very much propagate their language, which made the ways of communication

munication far more eaſy; and by the long and frequent correſpondence of the ſeveral parts of that empire one with another, the ways of travel and paſſage from one country to another were more ready and open. So that no age can be inſtanced, in all reſpects ſo convenient for the ſpeedy propagating of a new religion, as that wherein our SAVIOUR appeared, viz. when the Roman empire was at it's height. And it was very agreeable to the goodneſs and wiſdom of the divine providence, that the braveſt and moſt virtuous people in the world (infinitely beyond either the Perſians and Grecians) ſhould be choſen by GOD, as one of the chiefeſt means for the ſpreading of the beſt and moſt perfect revelation that ever GOD made to the world.

Thirdly, it is objected, that we have not now ſufficient evidence of the truth of Chriſtianity, the main arguments for it relying upon matters of fact, of which at this diſtance, we have not, nor can be ſuppoſed to have, ſufficient aſſurance. To this I anſwer,

1. That men not only may have, but have an undoubted aſſurance of matters of fact, ancienter than theſe we are ſpeaking of; and the diſtance of them from our times creates no manner of ſcruple in the minds of men concerning them. That there was ſuch a man as Alexander the Great, and that he conquered Darius and the Perſians; that Julius Cæſar invaded our nation, and in ſome meaſure ſubdued it; and that he overcame Pompey in the battle of Pharſalia; and innumerable other things which I might inſtance in, that were done before our SAVIOUR's time, are firmly believed without any manner of doubt and ſcruple by mankind, notwithſtanding they were done ſo long ago. So that ancient matters of fact are capable of clear evidence, and we may have ſufficient aſſurance of them. And where there is equal evidence, if we do not give equal belief, the fault is not in the argument, but in the paſſion or prejudice of thoſe to whom it is propoſed.

2. We have every whit as great aſſurance, (nay greater if it can, or needed to be) of the matters upon which the proof of Chriſtianity relies, as of thoſe which I hav

I have mentioned. The matters of fact, upon which the truth of Christianity relies, are, that there was such a person as JESUS CHRIST; that he wrought such miracles; that he was put to death at Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate; that he rose again from the dead, and was visibly taken up into heaven; that he bestowed miraculous gifts and powers upon the apostles, to make them competent witnesses of his resurrection, and of the truth of that doctrine which they published in his name; that accordingly they preached the gospel to the world, and in a short space, without any human advantages did propagate it, and gain entertainment for it in most parts of the then known world.

Now these matters of fact have the same testimony of histories, wrote in those times, and conveyed down to us, by as general and uncontrolled a tradition, as the conquests of Alexander, and Julius Cæsar. So that if we do not afford equal belief to them, it is a sign that we have some prejudice or interest against the one, more than against the other, though the evidence for both be equal. Nay, I go farther, that the evidence for these things, which are the foundation of Christianity, is so much the greater, because that which depended upon it, was of far greater concernment to the world, and consequently mankind were more obliged to search more narrowly into it.

For our SAVIOUR's life, and death, and resurrection, we have the testimony of a great number of eye-witnesses, who have wrote the history of these things. And though they were truly extraordinary persons, and gave testimony to themselves by miracles; yet at present I desire no more, but that they be looked upon, as knowing and honest relators of what they heard and saw; and that the same credit be given to them, which we give to Livy, and Arian, and Q. Curtius, for plain events, and matters of fact.

But yet I must add withal, that besides the miracles which they wrought, they gave greater testimony of their integrity, than any historian in the world ever did. For they willingly suffered the greatest persecution and torment,

torment, yea, and death itſelf, in confirmation of the truth of what they delivered. And for the propagating of the Chriſtian religion through ſo great a part of the world, it is evident by the effect beyond all denial.

So that for the matters of fact, upon which the truth of Chriſtianity does depend, here is greater, and more advantageous evidence of hiſtory, than for any other matter of equal antiquity whatſoever.

3. As to the ſubſtance of theſe matters of fact, we have the concurring teſtimony of the greateſt enemies of the Chriſtian religion. That there were ſuch perſons as our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles, that they preached ſuch a doctrine, that they wrought ſuch miracles; for this we have the acknowledgment of the Jews, and the teſtimony of the Heathen hiſtorians, and particularly of Celſus, and Porphyry, and Julian, who were the particular and moſt learned adverſaries of the Chriſtian religion. So that as to the matters of fact, there is no objection againſt them, whatever uſe we may make of them, or whatever conſequences we may draw from them. And I preſume it agreed by all objectors, that if theſe matters of fact be true, they are a ſufficient foundation of the truth of our religion, and we are very unequal to our religion, if we make a doubt of theſe things, which the greateſt enemies of Chriſtianity never had the face to deny.

1. And beſides all this, to recompenſe the diſadvantage which we have of thoſe who ſaw the miracles of our SAVIOUR and his apoſtles, we have the *teſtimonium rei*, the evidence of the effects of theſe things to confirm our belief of them; and this is an advantage which the firſt ages of Chriſtianity could not have. We ſee our SAVIOUR's predictions of the ſucceſs of his religion in the world, in the propagating and eſtabliſhing of it fully accompliſhed, notwithſtanding the fierce oppoſition and reſiſtance that was made againſt it by the greateſt powers of the world. We ſee the diſperſion of the Jews in all nations, and the miſery and contempt which they every where ſuffer; and that now for above ſixteen hundred years, they have continued a diſtinct people,

and

and a spectacle of the divine justice and severity, for rejecting and crucifying the SON of GOD, and for a lasting and standing testimony of the truth of our SAVIOUR's prediction, and of the Christian religion.

So that though we live at this distance from the rise and beginning of Christianity; yet we have the relation of those things, which give confirmation to it, conveyed down to us in as credible a manner, as any ancient matter of fact ever was; and the effects of things remaining to this day, do give testimony to the truth of it.

Fourthly, it is objected, that the terms of Christianity seem very hard, and to lay too great restraints upon human nature. It commands us to mortify our lusts, and subdue our passions, and *deny ungodliness, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world: to be holy in all manner of conversation; to have respect to whatever things are honest, and true, and just, and virtuous, and of good report; and to deny ourselves*; and to part with the dearest enjoyments of this life, *yea, and with life itself, for the sake of* CHRIST, *and his gospel*. Now these seem to be very hard terms to forego all the present pleasures and enjoyments of this life, in hopes of a future happiness, which we are less assured of.

To this I answer,

1. That this is a greater objection against religion in general, than the Christian religion. For natural religion requires of us all the main duties that Christianity does, and gives us far less assurance of the reward of our obedience. Natural religion requires piety, and justice, and charity, the due government of our appetites and passions, as well as Christianity does; but does not discover to us the rewards of another world, by many degrees so clearly, as our LORD and SAVIOUR, who hath *brought life and immortality to light by the gospel*, and by his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven, hath given us full assurance of another life after this, and of a glorious immortality. So that though we have not, nor can have the evidence of sense, for a future state, yet we have all the rational evidence for

for it, that can be wiſhed or expected; and much more than men have for thoſe adventures of their lives and fortunes, which they frequently make in the world, and think themſelves reaſonable in ſo doing.

2. The reſtraints, which Chriſtianity lays upon men, are in the judgment of mankind ſo far from being an objection againſt it, that they are highly to the commendation of it. Nay, it were the greateſt objection that could be againſt our religion, if it did ſet us at liberty from thoſe reſtraints. What can be more to the credit of any religion than to command men to be juſt, and charitable, and peaceable? and what more to the advantage of the profeſſors of it? and on the contrary, what can reflect more upon any religion, than to indulge and allow men in any vice contrary to theſe? it ſhews men are glad to make any thing an objection againſt Chriſtianity when they lay hold of that, which, if it had been otherwiſe, they would have made ten times more clamour againſt it for the contrary.

3. As for moſt of theſe reſtraints which Chriſtianity lays upon us, they are of that nature, ſo much both for our private and publick advantage, that ſetting aſide all conſiderations of religion, and of the rewards and puniſhments of another life, they are really good for us, and if GOD had not laid them upon us, we ought in reaſon, in order to our temporal benefit and advantage, to have laid them upon ourſelves. If there were no religion, I know men would not have ſuch ſtrong and forcible obligations to theſe duties; but yet I ſay, though there were no religion, it were good for men, in order to temporal ends, to their health, and quiet, and reputation, and ſafety, in a word, to the private and publick proſperity of mankind, that men ſhould be temperate, chaſte, and juſt, and peaceable, and charitable, and kind, and obliging to one another, rather than the contrary. So that religion does not create thoſe reſtraints arbitrarily, but requires thoſe things of us which our reaſon, and regard to our advantage, which the neceſſity and conveniency of the things themſelves

without any conſideration of religion, would in moſt caſes urge us to.

4. As to the caſe of perſecution for religion; beſides that it does not now happen ſo frequently as it did in the beginning of Chriſtianity, nay very ſeldom in compariſon, if all things be conſidered, it cannot be thought unreaſonable, both becauſe religion offers to us, in conſideration of our preſent ſufferings, a happineſs unſpeakably greater than that which we forego for the ſake of religion; and becauſe when it happens, GOD does extraordinarily enable men to go through it with courage and comfort, as we ſee in the examples of the primitive Chriſtians, who in great numbers of all tempers and ages, did voluntarily chooſe to give up themſelves to theſe ſufferings, when there was no neceſſity laid upon them, but fair terms of retreat were offered to them by their enemies. It is one thing when a man ſuffers by the law, and cannot help it; and another thing when men may avoid ſuffering. In the former caſe men ſubmit to neceſſity, and bear it as well as they can; in the latter caſe, if men ſuffer, it is a ſign they firmly believe the reward of it; and if they ſuffer chearfully, and with joy, as moſt of the martyrs did, it is a plain evidence that GOD affords them extraordinary ſupport in their ſufferings; and then the caſe is not very hard, when religion puts them upon nothing, but what it gives them cauſe, and enables them, to rejoice in the doing of it.

Fifthly, it is objected; that the Chriſtian religion is apt to diſpirit men, and to break the courage and vigor of their minds, by the precepts of patience, and humility, and meekneſs, and forgiving injuries, and the like. This objection hath made a great noiſe in the world, and hath been urged by men of great reputation, and of deep inſight into the tempers of men, and affairs of the world. It is ſaid to be particularly inſiſted upon by Machiavel, and very likely it may; though I think not elſewhere he is pleaſed to ſpeak with terms of reſpect, not only of religion in general, but likewiſe of the Chriſtian religion; and (which ſeems very much to

contradict the other) he ſays in the firſt book of his diſcourſes upon Livy, (chap. xi.) that the greatneſs and ſucceſs of Rome is chiefly to be aſcribed to their piety and religion; and that Rome was more indebted to Numa Pompilius for ſettling religion among them, than to Romulus the founder of their ſtate; and the reaſon he gives is much to our preſent purpoſe; for, ſays he, without religion there can be no military diſcipline, religion being the foundation of good laws and good diſcipline. And particularly he commends the Samnites, who betook themſelves to religion, as their laſt and beſt remedy to make men courageous, nothing being more apt to raiſe mens ſpirits than religion.

But howſoever this objection be, I dare appeal both to reaſon and experience for the confutation of it.

1. To reaſon, and that as to theſe two things.

(1.) That the Chriſtian religion is apt to plant in the minds of men principles of the greateſt reſolution and trueſt courage. It teacheth men upon the beſt and moſt rational grounds to deſpiſe dangers, yea, and death itſelf, the greateſt and moſt formidable evil in this world; and this principle is likely to inſpire men with the greateſt courage; for what need he fear any thing in this world, who fears not death, after which there is nothing in this world to be feared? and this the Chriſtian religion does, by giving men the aſſurance of another life, and a happineſs, infinitely greater than any is to be enjoyed in this world. And, in order to the ſecuring of this happineſs, it teacheth men to be holy, and juſt, and to exerciſe a good conſcience both toward GOD and man, which is the only way to free a man from all inward and tormenting fears of what may happen to him after death. *This makes the righteous man to be* (as Solomon ſays) *bold as a lion.* Nothing renders a man more undaunted as to death, and the conſequences of it, than the peace of his own mind; for a man not to be conſcious to himſelf of having wilfully diſpleaſed him, who alone can make us happy or miſerable in the other world. So that a good man, being ſecure of the favour of GOD, may upon that account reaſonably hope for a greater happineſs

neſs after death than other men: whereas a bad man, if he be ſober, and have his ſenſes awakened to a ſerious conſideration of things, cannot but be afraid to die; and be extreamly anxious and ſollicitous what will become of him in another world. And ſurely it would make the ſtouteſt man breathing afraid to venture upon death, when he ſees hell beyond it. Poſſibly there may be ſome monſters of men, who may have ſo far ſuppreſſed the ſenſe of religion, and ſtupified their conſciences, as in a good meaſure to have conquered the fears of death, and of the conſequences of it. But this happens but to very few, as the poet tells us in the perſon of an epicurean.

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoſcere cauſas,
Atque metus omnes & inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus, ſtrepitumque Acherontis avari.

There are very few that attain to this temper, but at ſome times. So that if vice and wickedneſs do generally break the firmneſs of men's ſpirits; it remains, that nothing but religion can generally give men courage againſt death. And this the Chriſtian religion does eminently to thoſe who live according to it; our bleſſed SAVIOUR having delivered us from the fear of death, by conquering death for us, and giving us aſſurance of the glorious rewards of another life.

(2.) Meekneſs, and patience, and humility, and modeſty, and ſuch virtues of Chriſtianity, do not in reaſon tend to diſpirit men, and break their true courage, but only to regulate it, and take away the fierceneſs and brutiſhneſs of it. This we ſee in experience, that men of the trueſt courage, have many times leaſt of pride and inſolence, of paſſion and fierceneſs. Thoſe who are better bred, are commonly of more gentle and civil diſpoſitions: but yet they do not therefore want true courage, though they have not the roughneſs and fool-hardineſs of men of ruder breeding. So in a true Chriſtian, courage and greatneſs of mind, is very conſiſtent with meekneſs, and patience, and humility. Not that all good

men are very courageous; there is much of this in the natural tempers of men, which religion does not quite alter. But that which I am concerned to maintain is, that Chriſtianity is no hindrance to men's courage, and that *cæteris paribus*, ſuppoſing men of equal tempers, no man hath ſo much reaſon to be valiant, as he that hath a good conſcience; I do not mean a bluſtering, and boiſterous, and raſh courage; but a ſober, and calm, and fixed valour.

2. I appeal to experience for the truth of this. Did ever greater courage and contempt of death appear in all ages, and ſexes, and conditions of men, than in the primitive martyrs? were any of the heathen ſoldiers comparable to the Chriſtian legion, for reſolution and courage, even the heathens themſelves being judges? The religion of Mahomet ſeems to be contrived to inſpire men with fierceneſs and deſperateneſs of reſolution, and yet I do not find, but that generally where there hath been any equality for number, the Chriſtians have been ſuperior to them in valour, and have given greater inſtances of reſolution and courage, than the Turks have done. So that I wonder upon what grounds this objection hath been taken up againſt Chriſtianity, when there is nothing either in the nature of this religion, or from the experience of the world, to give any tolerable countenance to it. And ſurely the beſt way to know what effect any religion is likely to have upon the minds of men, is to conſider what effects it hath had in the conſtant experience of mankind. There remains the other two objections, which I mentioned, but I muſt reſerve them to another opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON CXIX.

The prejudices againſt JESUS and his religion conſidered.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

MATTH. xi. 6.

And bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.

FROM theſe words I propoſed to conſider theſe two things.

I. The prejudices and objections which the world at firſt had, and many ſtill have, againſt our bleſſed SAVIOUR and his religion.

II. That it is a great happineſs to eſcape the common prejudices which men are apt to entertain againſt religion.

I have conſidered thoſe objections which the Jews and heathen philoſophers made againſt our SAVIOUR and his religion: and,

II. Thoſe which at this day are inſiſted upon by the ſecret and open enemies of our religion. And I mentioned ſeven, the two laſt of which I ſhall now ſpeak to.

Sixthly, it is objected that there are many diviſions and factions among Chriſtians. This I confeſs is a great reproach and ſcandal to our religion: but no ſufficient argument againſt it. And,

1. To leſſen and abate the force of this objection, it is to be conſidered, that a very great part of the diviſions that are among thoſe that are called Chriſtians, are about things that do not concern the eſſentials of Chriſtianity, and therefore they are no argument that Chriſtianity

ſtianity is not true, becauſe they bring no ſuſpicion of doubt and uncertainty upon the fundamentals of Chriſtianity, which all agree in, tho' they differ in other things. 'Tis true indeed they are very undecent, and contrary to the nature and precepts of the Chriſtian religion, which above any religion in the world does ſtrictly require love and unity. They take off much from the ſtrength and beauty of our religion: but do by no means deſtroy the truth of it.

2. How many and great ſoever they may be, yet they can with no colour of reaſon be imputed to the Chriſtian religion, as giving any cauſe or encouragement to them, however by accident it may be the occaſion of them. For no man doubts but that the beſt things in the world may be perverted by bad men, and made an occaſion of a great deal of miſchief in the world, and yet be very innocent of all that miſchief. No man can deny but that Chriſtianity does ſtrictly enjoin love, and peace, and unity, among all the members of that profeſſion; and ſo far as Chriſtians are factious and unpeaceable, ſo far they are no Chriſtians. So that a man may as well except againſt philoſophy, becauſe of the differences that were among the philoſophers, and ſay there was no truth among them, becauſe they were not all agreed in all things; as call the truth of Chriſtianity in queſtion, for the differences that are among Chriſtians. Nay, a man might every whit as well except againſt laws and government; becauſe, notwithſtanding them, there are frequent ſeditions and rebellions, infinite ſuits and controverſies occaſioned even by the very laws: but no man was ever ſo unreaſonable as to think this a good reaſon againſt laws and government.

3. The diviſions of Chriſtians are ſo far from being an argument againſt Chriſtianity, that, on the contrary, they are an argument that men ſhould embrace Chriſtianity more heartily, and make more conſcience of obeying the precepts of it. And if they did this, the greateſt part of thoſe contentions and uncharitable animoſities which are among them would preſently ceaſe. If the Chriſtian religion were truly entertained, and men did ſeriouſly

ſeriouſly mind the precepts of it, and give up themſelves to the obedience of it's laws, differences would not be eaſily commenced, nor ſo vehemently proſecuted, nor ſo pertinaciouſly continued in, as they are. Men would not, upon every ſlight reaſon, and little doubt and ſcruple, rend and tear the body of CHRIST in pieces, and ſeparate themſelves from the communion of the church they live in, and in which they were baptized and received their Chriſtianity.

If men ſeriouſly conſidered, and truly underſtood what they do, when they divide the Church of CHRIST upon little ſcruples and pretences, they would hardly be able to think themſelves Chriſtians, whilſt they continued in theſe unchriſtian and uncharitable practices.

If men would but be, or do, what Chriſtianity requires, there would be no occaſion for this objection; and if men will not, Chriſtian religion is not to be blamed for it, but thoſe that act ſo contrary to the plain precepts and directions of it. I proceed to the

Seventh and laſt objection, the vicious and wicked lives of a great part of the profeſſors of Chriſtianity. This is a heavy objection indeed, and ſuch an one, that tho' we may juſtly be aſhamed to own the truth of it, yet can we not have the face to deny it. 'Tis ſo ſad a truth, that it is enough to confound us, and to fill all our faces with ſhame and bluſhing: but yet it is an objection not ſo ſtrong againſt Chriſtianity, as it is ſhameful to Chriſtians. And notwithſtanding the utmoſt force of it, we have no cauſe to be aſhamed of the goſpel of CHRIST; but the goſpel of CHRIST may juſtly be aſhamed of us. For whatever we be, *the goſpel of* CHRIST *is the power of* GOD *unto ſalvation.* The natural tendency of it is to reform and ſave men, and *the wrath of* GOD *is therein revealed againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, however they may detain the truths of* GOD *in unrighteouſneſs*, and not ſuffer them to have their due and proper influence upon their hearts and lives.

But that I may give a more clear and particular anſwer to it, I deſire you to attend to theſe following conſiderations.

1. It cannot be denied, but that Chriſtianity hath had once very great and marvellous effects upon the hearts and lives of men. And for this I appeal to the lives and manners of the primitive Chriſtians, for which we have not only the teſtimony of our own books and writers, but even of the adverſaries of our religion. What reformation Chriſtianity at firſt wrought in the manners of men, we have clear and full teſtimony, from what the apoſtles wrote concerning the ſeveral churches which they planted in ſeveral parts of the world. What hearty unity and affection there was among Chriſtians; even to that degree, as to make men bring in their private eſtates and poſſeſſions for the common ſupport of their brethren, we may read in the hiſtory of the Acts of the apoſtles. The city of Corinth, by the account which Strabo gives of it, was a very vicious and luxurious place, as moſt in the world; and yet we ſee by St Paul, what a ſtrange reformation the Chriſtian religion made in the lives and manners of many of them; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. *Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, not idolaters, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of* GOD. *And ſuch were ſome of you: but ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified, in the name of the* LORD JESUS, *and by the* SPIRIT *of our* GOD. And ſurely it is no ſmall matter to reclaim men from ſuch a profligate courſe of life. The apoſtle inſtanceth in crimes and vices of the firſt rate, from which yet he tells us many were cleanſed and purified *by the name of the* LORD JESUS, *and the* SPIRIT *of* GOD; that is, by the power and efficacy of the Chriſtian doctrine, together with the co-operation of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT.

After the apoſtles, the ancient fathers, in their apologies for Chriſtianity, give us a large account of the great power and efficacy of the Chriſtian doctrine upon the

the lives and manners of men. Tertullian tells the Roman governors, that their prisons were full of malefactors, committed for several crimes; but they were all heathens. *De vestris semper æstuat carcer*, "their prisons were thronged with criminals of their own religion:" but there were no Christians to be found committed there for such crimes; *Nemo illic Christianus, nisi hoc tantùm*, &c. "There were no Christians in their "prisons, but only upon account of their religion." Or if there were any malefactors that had been Christians, they left their religion when they fell into those enormities. And afterwards he adds, that if Christians were irregular in their lives, they were no longer accounted Christians, but were banished from their communion as unworthy of it. And they appealed to the heathens, what a sudden and strange change Christianity had made in several of the most lewd, and vicious, and debauched persons, and what a visible reformation there presently appeared in the lives of the worst of men, after they had once entertained the Christian doctrine.

And these testimonies are so much the stronger, because they are publick appeals to our adversaries, which it is not likely they who were so persecuted and hated as the Christians were, would have had the confidence to have made, if they had not been notoriously true, even their enemies themselves being judges.

And that they were so, we have the confession of the heathens themselves. I shall produce two remarkable testimonies to this purpose, and one of them from the pen of one of the bitterest enemies that the Christian religion ever had.

Pliny, in his epistle to Trajan the emperor, gives him an account, "that having examined the Christians, set-"ting aside the superstition of their way, he could find "no fault; and that this was the sum of their error, "that they were wont to meet before day, and sing a "hymn to CHRIST, and to bind themselves by solemn "oath or sacrament, not to any wicked purpose, but "not to steal, nor rob, nor commit adultery, nor break "their faith, nor detain the pledge." So that it seems

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the ſum of their error was, to oblige themſelves in the ſtricteſt manner againſt the greateſt vices and crimes. Which methinks is a great teſtimony from an enemy and a judge, one who would have been ready to diſcover their faults, and had opportunity of enquiring into them.

My other witneſs is Julian the emperor and apoſtate, who in one of his epiſtles tells us, *the chriſtians did ſeverely puniſh ſedition and impiety.* And afterwards exhorting the heathen prieſts to all offices of humanity, and eſpecially alms towards the poor; he tells them, they ought to be more careful in this particular, and to mend this fault; *becauſe* (ſays he) *the Galileans taking advantage of our neglect in this kind, have very much ſtrengthened their impiety* (for ſo he calls their religion) *by being very intent upon theſe offices, and exemplary in their charity to the poor, whereby they gained many over to them.*

And in his 49th epiſtle to Arſacius the high-prieſt of Galatia, he recommends to him, among other means for the advancement of paganiſm, the building of hoſpitals, and great liberality to the poor, not only of their own religion, but others. *For,* ſays he, *it is a ſhame that the impious Galileans ſhould not only maintain their own poor, but ours alſo; wherefore let us not ſuffer them to outdo us in this virtue.* Nothing but the force of truth could have extorted ſo full an acknowledgment of the great humanity and charity of the Chriſtians, from ſo bitter an enemy of our religion as Julian was. If he owned it, we may be ſure it was very great and exemplary.

So that you ſee that the Chriſtian religion had a very great power and efficacy upon the lives and manners of men when it firſt appeared in the world. And the true ſpirit and genius of any religion, the force of any inſtitution is beſt ſeen in the primitive effects of it; before it be weakened and diſpirited by thoſe corruptions, which in time are apt to inſinuate themſelves into the beſt things. For all laws and inſtitutions are commonly more vigorous, and have greater effects at firſt, than afterwards; and the beſt things are apt in time to degenerate

generate and to contract ſoil and ruſt. And it cannot in reaſon be expected otherwiſe. So that though it be a thing to be bewailed, and by the greateſt care and diligence to be reſiſted, yet it is not ſo extremely to be wondered at, if Chriſtianity, in the ſpace of ſixteen hundred years, hath abated much of it's firſt ſtrength and vigor.

Eſpecially conſidering, there were ſeveral circumſtances, that gave Chriſtianity mighty advantages at firſt, eſpecially the miraculous powers which did accompany the firſt publication of the goſpel; which muſt needs be full of conviction to thoſe who ſaw the wonderful effects of it: the extraordinary operation of the SPIRIT of GOD upon the minds of men, to diſpoſe them to the receiving of it: the perſecuted and ſuffering ſtate that Chriſtians were generally in, which made thoſe who embraced the profeſſion to be generally ſerious and in good earneſt in it, and kept up a continual heat and zeal in the minds of men for that religion which coſt them ſo dear, and for which they ſuffer'd ſo much: and the fury of their enemies againſt it, did naturally inflame their love and kindneſs to one another; nothing being a greater endearment among men, than common ſufferings in a common cauſe. So long as Chriſtians were not corrupted by ſecular intereſts; and by denying all for CHRIST, were free from covetouſneſs and ambition, the great roots of all evil, the church of CHRIST, *though ſhe was black, yet ſhe was comely, and terrible as an army with banners*; ſhe was all this while in an excellent poſture to reſiſt the temptations, and fight againſt the vices and corruptions of the world: but after the world broke in upon the Church, and Chriſtianity was countenanced by the powers of the world, and watered with ſecular preferments and encouragements, no wonder if the tares began to grow up with the wheat: then *iniquity began to abound, and the love of many began to grow cold.* When the ſun of proſperity began to ſhine upon the Chriſtian profeſſion, then no wonder if the vermin bred and ſwarmed every where. When it grew creditable and advantageous for

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men to be Chriſtians, this muſt in all reaſon make a world of hypocrites and counterfeit profeſſors.

Theſe things, I reckon, muſt in reaſon make a mighty difference between the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, and thoſe which have followed ſince; and no wonder, if the real fruits and effects of religion in theſe ſeveral ſtates of Chriſtianity be very unequal. For proſperity and adverſity made a wide difference in this matter. The perſecution of any religion naturally makes the profeſſors of it real; and the proſperity of it does as naturally allure and draw in hypocrites. Beſides that even the beſt of men are more corrupted by proſperity than affliction.

But tho' Chriſtians were beſt under perſecution, yet GOD did not think fit always to continue them in that ſtate, becauſe he would not tempt them and tire them out with perpetual ſufferings; and after he had given the world a ſufficient experiment of the power and efficacy of the Chriſtian religion, in maintaining and propagating itſelf in deſpite of all the violence and oppoſition of the world, ſufficient for ever to give reputation to it; he then thought good to leave it to be kept up by more human ways, and ſuch as offer leſs violence to the nature of a man. Being once eſtabliſhed and ſettled in the world, and upon equal terms of advantage with other religions, GOD left it to be ſupported by more ordinary means; by pious education, and diligent inſtruction, and good laws and government, without miracles, and without perſecution, and without thoſe extraordinary and overpowering communications of his grace and SPIRIT which he afforded to the firſt ages of Chriſtianity.

I have inſiſted the longer upon this, that men may ſee what effects Chriſtianity hath had upon the lives of men, by which we may ſee the proper nature and efficacy of it; and withal may not wonder ſo much that it hath not the ſame effects now. Though it be matter of great ſhame to us, that they are ſo vaſtly diſproportionable to what they were at firſt.

2. Though the diſproportion be very great between the effects of Chriſtianity at firſt, and what it hath now upon

upon the lives of men; yet we ought not to deny, but it hath ſtill ſome good effects upon mankind; and it is our great ſhame and fault that it hath no better. If we will ſpeak juſtly of things, as to the general civility of life and manners, freedom from tyranny, and barbarouſneſs, and cruelty, and ſome other enormous vices; yea and as to the exemplary piety and virtue of great numbers of particular perſons of ſeveral nations, there is no compariſon between the general ſtate of Chriſtendom, and the pagan and mahometan parts of the world. Next to Chriſtianity, and the law of Moſes, (which was confined to one nation) philoſophy was the moſt likely inſtrument to reform mankind that hath been in the world; and it had very conſiderable effects upon ſome particular perſons, both as to the rectifying of their opinions, and the reforming of their lives: but upon the generality of mankind it did very little in either of theſe reſpects, eſpecially as to the rectifying of the abſurd and impious opinions of the people concerning GOD, and their ſuperſtitious worſhip of the deity. Whereas the Chriſtian religion did univerſally, wherever it came, ſet men free from thoſe groſs impieties and ſuperſtitions, and taught men to worſhip the only true GOD in a right manner.

Though we muſt confeſs to the eternal reproach of the Chriſtian religion, that the weſtern church hath degenerated ſo far, that it ſeems to be in a great meaſure relapſed into the ignorance and ſuperſtition of paganiſm; out of which degeneracy, that GOD hath reſcued us, as we have infinite cauſe to adore his goodneſs, ſo we have all the reaſon in the world to dread and deteſt a return into this ſpiritual Egypt, this houſe of darkneſs and bondage, and the bringing of our necks again under *that yoke, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.*

So that you ſee that there are ſtill very conſiderable effects of the Chriſtian religion in the world, yea and I doubt not but in thoſe places where it is moſt corrupted and degenerated; becauſe they ſtill retain the eſſential doctrines of Chriſtianity, which have not quite loſt

their force, notwithſtanding the many errors and corruptions that are mixt with them. And as God knows, and every man ſees it, that the generality of Chriſtians are very bad, notwithſtanding all the influence of that excellent religion which they profeſs; yet I think it is very evident, men would be much worſe without it. For though very many who have entertained the principles of Chriſtianity are very wicked in their lives; yet many are otherwiſe: and thoſe that are bad have this advantage by their religion, that it is in it's nature apt to reduce and recover men from a wicked courſe, and ſometimes does: whereas the caſe of thoſe perſons would have been deſperate, were it not for thoſe principles of religion which were implanted in them by Chriſtian education, and though they were long ſuppreſſed, yet did at laſt awaken them to a conſideration of their condition, and proved the happy means of their recovery.

3. I will not deny that there are ſome perſons as bad, nay perhaps worſe, that have been bred up in the Chriſtian religion, than are commonly to be found in the darkneſs of paganiſm; for the corruption of the beſt things is the worſt, and thoſe who have reſiſted ſo great a light as that of the goſpel is, are like to prove the moſt deſperately wicked of all others. There is nothing that men make worſe uſe of, than of light and liberty, two of the beſt and moſt pleaſant things in the world. Knowledge is many times abuſed to the worſt purpoſe, and liberty into licentiouſneſs and ſedition; and yet no man for all that thinks ignorance deſirable, or would wiſh a perpetual night and darkneſs to the world; and conclude from the inconveniences of abuſed liberty, that the beſt ſtate of things would be, that the generality of mankind ſhould be all ſlaves to a few, and be perpetually chained to the oar, or condemned to the mines.

There are many times as bad conſequences of good things, as of bad: but yet there is a great difference between good and bad for all that. As knowledge and liberty, ſo likewiſe the Chriſtian religion is a great happineſs

pineſs to the world in general, though ſome are ſo unhappy as to be the worſe for it; not becauſe religion is bad, but becauſe they are ſo.

4. If religion be a matter of men's free choice, it is not to be expected that it ſhould neceſſarily and conſtantly have it's effects upon men; for it works upon us not by way of force or natural neceſſity, but of moral perſuaſion. If religion, and the grace of GOD which goes along with it, did force men to be good and virtuous, and no man could be ſo unleſs he were thus violently forced, then it would be no virtue in any man to be good, nor any crime and fault to be otherwiſe. For then the reaſon why ſome men are good, would be becauſe they could not help it; and others bad, becauſe the grace of GOD did not make them ſo whether they would or not.

But religion does not thus work upon men. It directs men to their duty by the ſhorteſt and plaineſt precepts of a good life; it perſuades men to the obedience of theſe precepts, by the promiſes of eternal happineſs, and the threatnings of eternal miſery in caſe of obſtinate diſobedience; it offers us the aſſiſtance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, to help our weakneſs, and enable us to that, for which *we are not ſufficient of ourſelves*, but there is nothing of violence or neceſſity in all this. After all, men may diſobey theſe precepts, and not be perſuaded by theſe arguments, may not make uſe of this grace which GOD offers, may *quench and reſiſt the* HOLY GHOST, *and reject the counſel of* GOD *againſt themſelves*. And the caſe being thus, it is no wonder, if the temptations of this preſent world prevail upon the vicious inclinations of men againſt their duty, and their true intereſt; and conſequently if the motives and arguments of the Chriſtian religion have not a conſtant and certain effect upon a great part of mankind. Not but that Chriſtianity is apt to bring men to goodneſs; but ſome are ſo obſtinately bad, as not to be wrought upon by the moſt powerful conſiderations it can offer to them.

5. It cannot be denied, but that Chriſtianity is as well framed to make men good, as any religion can be

imagined to be; and therefore wherever the fault be, it cannot be in the Christian religion, that we are not good. So that the bad lives of Christians are no sufficient objection either against the truth or goodness of the Christine doctrine. Besides the confirmation that was given to it by miracles, the excellency of the doctrine, and it's proper tendency to make men holy and virtuous, are a plain evidence of it's divine and heavenly original. And surely the goodness of any religion consists in the sufficiency of it's precepts to direct men to their duty; in the force of it's arguments to persuade men to it; and the suitableness of it's aids and helps to enable us to the discharge and performance of it. And all those advantages the Christian religion hath above any religion or institution that ever was in the world. The reasonable and plain rules of a good life are no where so perfectly collected, as in the discourses of our blessed SAVIOUR and his apostles. No religion ever gave men so full assurance of the mighty rewards and punishments of another world; nor such gracious promises of divine assistance, and such evidence of it, especially in the piety, and virtue, and patience, and self-denial of the primitive Christians, as the doctrine of GOD our SAVIOUR hath done, *which teacheth men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world, in contemplation of the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great* GOD, *and our* SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.*

6. And lastly, after all that hath or can be said, it must be acknowledged, and ought sadly to be lamented by us, that the wicked lives of Christians are a marvellous scandal and reproach to our holy religion, and a great obstacle to the spreading of it in the world, and a real objection against it to prejudiced persons, with whom it doth justly bring into doubt the goodness and efficacy of the institution itself, to see how little effect it hath upon the hearts and lives of men. It is hard for a ma-

to maintain the reputation of an excellent master in any kind, when all the world sees, that most of his scholars prove dunces. Whatever commendation may be given to any art or science, men will question the truth and reality of it, when they see the greatest part of those who profess it, not able to do any thing answerable to it. The Christian religion pretends to be an art of serving GOD more decently and devoutly, and of living better than other men; but if it be so, why do not the professors of this excellent religion shew the force and virtue of it in their lives? and though I have sufficiently shewn, that this is not enough to overthrow the truth, and disparage the excellency of the Christian doctrine; yet it will certainly go a great way with prejudiced persons, and it cannot be expected otherwise.

So that we have infinite reason to be ashamed, that there is so plain a contrariety between the laws of Christianity, and the lives of the greatest part of Christians; so notorious and palpable a difference between the religion that is in the Bible, and that which is to be seen and read in the conversations of men.

Who that looks upon the manners of the present age, could believe, (if he did not know it) that the holy and pure doctrine of the Christian religion had ever been so much as heard, much less pretended to be entertained and believed among us? nay, among those who seem to make a more serious profession of religion, when we consider how strangely they allow themselves in malice and envy, in passion and anger, and uncharitable censures, and evil speaking, in fierce contentions and animosities; who would believe that the great instrument of these mens religion, I mean the Holy Bible, by which they profess to regulate and govern their lives, were full of plain and strict precepts of love and kindness, of charity and peace, and did a hundred times with all imaginable severity, and under pain of forfeiting the kingdom of GOD, forbid malice and envy, and revenge, and evil speaking, and rash and uncharitable censures, and tell us so plainly that the Christian religion obligeth men *to put off all these*; and that *if any man seem to be religious,*

religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain? do men read and hear theſe things every day, and profeſs to believe them to be the truths of GOD, and yet live as if they were verily perſuaded they were falſe? what can we conclude from hence, but either that this is not Chriſtianity, or the greateſt part of us are no Chriſtians?

So that if one of the apoſtles or primitive Chriſtians ſhould riſe from the dead, and converſe among us, how would he wonder to ſee the face and complexion of Chriſtianity altered from what it was in their days; and were it not for the name and title which we bear, would ſooner gueſs us to be any thing than Chriſtians?

So that upon the whole matter, there is no way to quit our ſelves of this objection, and to waſh away the reproach of it, but to mend and reform our lives. 'Till this be done, it is unavoidable, but the vicious manners of men will affect our religion with obloquy and reproach, and derive an ill conceit and opinion of it into the minds of men. And I cannot ſee how Chriſtianity can ever gain much ground in the world, 'till it be better adorned and recommended by the profeſſors of it. Nay, we have juſt cauſe to fear, that if GOD do not raiſe up ſome great and eminent inſtruments to awaken the world out of this ſtupid lethargy, that Chriſtianity will every day decline, and the world will in a ſhort ſpace be over-run with atheiſm and infidelity. For vice, and ſuperſtition, and enthuſiaſm, which are the reigning diſeaſes of Chriſtendom, when they have run their courſe, and finiſhed their circle, do all naturally end, and meet in atheiſm. And then it will be time for the great judge of the world to appear, and effectually to convince men of that, which they would not be perſuaded to believe by any other means. And of this our SAVIOUR hath given us a terrible and fearful intimation in that queſtion of his; *when the ſon of man comes, ſhall he find faith upon earth?* our SAVIOUR hath not poſitively affirmed it, and GOD grant that we may not make it, and find it true.

And

And thus I have, by GOD's assistance, given the best satisfaction I could, to the most material exceptions I have met with against our blessed SAVIOUR and his religion. The

IId thing remains briefly to be spoken to, viz. how happy a thing it is to escape the common prejudices which men are apt to entertain against religion, *blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* And this will appear if we consider these three or four things.

First, that prejudice does many times sway and bias men against the plainest and clearest truths. We see in daily experience, what a false bias prejudice puts upon mens understandings. Men that are educated in the grossest errors and superstitions, how hard it is to convince them that they are in a wrong way! and with what difficulty are they persuaded of their mistake! nay, they have hardly the patience to be told they are in an error, much less to consider what may be offered against it. How do the passions and lusts of men blind them, and lead them aside from the truth, and incline them to that side of the question, which is most favourable to their lusts and interests? how partially do men lean to that part which makes most for their advantage, though all the reason in the world lie on the other side?

Now ignorance and mistake are a great slavery of the understanding, if there were no worse consequences of our errors: and therefore our SAVIOUR says excellently, that the truth makes men free; *ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

Secondly, prejudice does not only bias men against the plainest truths, but in matters of greatest concernment, in things that concern the honour of GOD, and the good of others, and our own welfare and happiness. Prejudices against religion occasion mistakes of the highest nature, and may lead men to superstition and idolatry, and to all manner of impiety, nay many times to atheism and infidelity. The prejudices against the doctrine of our SAVIOUR are of another concernment than the prejudices which men have against the writers of natural philosophy or eloquence, or any other human art or science.

ſcience. If a man's prejudice make him err in theſe matters, the thing is of no great moment: but the buſineſs of religion is a matter of the greateſt and weightieſt concernment to mankind.

Thirdly, the conſequences of mens prejudices in theſe things prove many times fatal and deſtructive to them. Men may upon unreaſonable prejudices *reject the counſel of* GOD *againſt themſelves*, as it is ſaid of the chief prieſts and phariſees among the Jews. Men may oppoſe the truth ſo obſtinately and perverſely, as to be *fighters againſt* GOD, and to bring certain ruin and *ſwift deſtruction upon themſelves*, both in this world, and the other; as the Jews did, who by oppoſing the doctrine of the goſpel, and perſecuting our SAVIOUR and his diſciples, *filled up the meaſure of their ſins, till wrath came upon them to the uttermoſt*. It is eaſy to entertain prejudices againſt religion, and by conſidering only the wrong ſide of things, to fortify our prejudices to ſuch a degree, and entrench ourſelves ſo ſtrongly in our errors, that the plaineſt and moſt convincing truths ſhall not be able to have any acceſs to us, or make any impreſſion upon us: but all this while we do in truth undermine our own happineſs, and are ſecretly working our own ruin; and while we think we are oppoſing an enemy, we are deſtroying ourſelves; *for who hath hardened himſelf againſt* GOD, and his truth, *and proſpered*. The principles of religion are a firm and immoveable rock, againſt which the more violently we daſh ourſelves, the more miſerably we ſhall be ſplit and ſhattered. Our bleſſed SAVIOUR and his religion have been to many, and are to this day, *a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence*; but he himſelf hath told us what ſhall be the fate of thoſe who are offended at him; *whoſoever ſhall fall on this ſtone, ſhall be broken*; *but upon whomſoever it ſhall fall, it ſhall grind him to powder*. And therefore well might he ſay here in the text, *bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me*.

Fourthly, there are but few in compariſon, who have the happineſs to eſcape and overcome the common prejudices which men are apt to entertain againſt religion.

Thus

Thus to be sure it was when Christianity first appeared in the world: and though among us the great prejudice of education be removed; yet there are still many, who upon one account or other are prejudiced against religion, at least so far, as not to yield to the power of it in their lives. Few men are so impartial in considering things, as not to be swayed by the interest of their lusts and passions, as to keep the balance of their judgments even, and to suffer nothing but truth and reason to weigh with them. We generally pretend to be *pilgrims and strangers in the world*, and to be all travelling towards heaven: but few of us have the indifferency of travellers; who are not concerned to find out the fairest and the easiest way, but to know which is the right way, and to go in it. Thus it should be with us, our end should always be in our eye, and we should choose our way only with respect to that; not considering our inclination so much as our design; nor choosing those principles for the government of our lives, which are most agreeable to our present desires, but those which will most certainly bring us to happiness at the last; and that I am sure the principles of the Christian religion, firmly believed and practised by us, will do.

Let us then be persuaded, by all that hath been said upon this argument, to a firm belief of the Christian doctrine. I hope you are in some measure satisfied, that the objections against it are not such, as ought much to move a wise and considerate man. If we believe that GOD hath taken so much care of mankind, as to make any certain revelation of his will to them, and of the way to eternal happiness; let us next consider, whether any religion in the world can come in competition with the Christian, and with half that reason pretend to be from GOD, that Christianity is able to produce for itself, whether we consider the things to be believed, or the duties to be practised, or the motives or arguments to the practice of those duties, or the divine confirmation that is given to the whole. And if we be thus persuaded concerning it, let us resolve to live up to the laws and rules of this holy religion. Our belief

of

of it signifies nothing without the fruits and effects of a good life. And if this were once resolved upon, the difficulty of believing would cease; for the true reason why men are unwilling to believe the truths of the gospel, is because they are loth to put them in practice. *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light.* The true ground of most mens prejudice against the Christian doctrine, is because they have no mind to obey it; and when all is done, the great objection that lies at the bottom of mens minds against it, is, that it is an enemy to their lusts, and they cannot profess to believe it without condemning themselves, for not complying with it in their lives and practice.

SERMON CXX.

JESUS the SON of GOD, proved by his resurrection.

ROMANS i. 4.

And declared to be the SON *of* GOD, *with power, according to the* SPIRIT *of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*

ST Paul in the beginning of this epistle (according to his custom in the rest) stiles himself an apostle, particularly called, and set apart by GOD, for the preaching of the gospel; the main subject whereof was, JESUS CHRIST *our* LORD; who as he was, according to his divine nature, *the eternal* SON *of* GOD; so according to his human nature, he was not only *the son of man*, but also *the* SON *of* GOD. *According to the flesh*

esh (that is, the weakneſs, and frailty, and mortality of his human nature) *he was the ſon of David*, that is, of his poſterity by his mother, who was of that houſe and line. *Made of the ſeed of David, according to the fleſh*, ver. 3. *But according to the* SPIRIT *of holineſs*; (that is, in regard of that divine power of the HOLY GHOST, which was manifeſted in him, eſpecially in his reſurrection from the dead) *he was demonſtrated to be the* SON *of* GOD; even according to his human nature; *declared to be the* SON *of* GOD, *with power, according to the* SPIRIT *of holineſs, by the reſurrection from the dead.*

All the difficulty in the words is concerning the meaning of this phraſe of CHRIST's being *declared to be the* SON *of* GOD: the word is ὁρισθέντος, which moſt frequently in Scripture does ſignify, *predeſtinated, decreed, determined*; but likewiſe ſignifies, that which is *defined, declared, demonſtrated, put out of all doubt and controverſy.* And in this ſenſe our tranſlation renders it, as if the apoſtle had ſaid, that our LORD JESUS CHRIST, though according to the frailty and weakneſs of his human nature, he was of the ſeed of David; yet in reſpect of that divine power of the HOLY GHOST, which manifeſted itſelf in him, eſpecially in his reſurrection from the dead, he was *declared to be the* SON *of* GOD, *with power*, that is, mightily, powerfully demonſtrated to be ſo; ſo as to put the matter out of all diſpute and controverſy.

And therefore following our own tranſlation, I ſhall handle the words in this ſenſe, as containing this propoſition in them: *that the reſurrection of our* LORD JESUS CHRIST *from the dead, by the* HOLY GHOST, *is a powerful demonſtration that he was the* SON *of* GOD.

And it will conduce very much to the clearing of this propoſition to conſider theſe two things.

Firſt, upon what account CHRIST, as man, is ſaid to be *the* SON *of* GOD.

Secondly, in what ſenſe he is ſaid to be *declared to be the* SON *of* GOD, *by his reſurrection from the dead.* The con-

consideration of these two particulars will fully clear this proposition, and the apostle's meaning in it.

First, upon what account CHRIST, as a man, is said to be *the* SON *of* GOD. And for our right apprehension of this matter, it is very well worthy our observation, that CHRIST, as man, is no where in Scripture said to be *the* SON *of* GOD, but with relation to the divine power of the HOLY GHOST, some way or other eminently manifested in him; I say the divine power of the HOLY GHOST, as the lord and giver of life, as he is called in the ancient creeds of the Christian church. For as men are naturally said to be the children of those from whom they receive their life and being; so CHRIST, as man, is said to be *the* SON *of* GOD, because he had life communicated to him, from the FATHER, by an immediate power of the SPIRIT of GOD, or the HOLY GHOST. First, at his conception, which was by the HOLY GHOST. The conception of our blessed SAVIOUR was an immediate act of the power of the HOLY GHOST, overshadowing, as the Scripture expresseth it, the blessed mother of our LORD: and then at his resurrection, when after his death, he was, by the operation of the HOLY GHOST, raised to life again.

Now upon these two accounts only, CHRIST as man is said in Scripture to be *the* SON *of* GOD. He was really so upon account of his conception; but this was secret and invisible: but most eminently and remarkably so, upon account of his resurrection, which was open and visible to all.

1. Upon account of his conception by the power of the HOLY GHOST. That upon this account he was called the SON *of* GOD, St Luke most expressly tells us, Luke i. 35. where the angel tells the virgin Mary that *the* HOLY GHOST *should come upon her, and the power of the highest should overshadow her, and therefore that holy thing, which should be born of her, should be called the* SON *of* GOD. And this our SAVIOUR means by *the* FATHER's *sanctifying him, and sending him into the world*; for which reason he says he might justly call himself the SON of GOD, John x. 35, 36. *If he called*

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them gods, unto whom the word of GOD *came, and the Scripture cannot be broken: ſay ye of him, whom the* FATHER *hath ſanctified, and ſent into the world, thou blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid I am the* SON *of* GOD? if there had been no other reaſon, this had been ſufficient to have given him the title of the SON of GOD, that he was brought into the world by the ſanctification, or divine power of the HOLY GHOST.

2. CHRIST is alſo ſaid in Scripture to be the SON of GOD, and to be declared to be ſo upon account of *his reſurrection from the dead*, by the power of the HOLY GHOST. His reſurrection from the dead, is here in the text aſcribed to *the* SPIRIT *of holineſs, or the* HOLY GHOST. And ſo in other places of Scripture, Rom. viii. 11. *If the* SPIRIT *of him that raiſed up* JESUS *from the dead, dwell in you:* and, 1 Pet. iii. 18. *Being put to death in the fleſh: but quickened by the* SPIRIT; that is, he ſuffered in that frail mortal nature which he aſſumed; but was raiſed again by the power of the HOLY GHOST, of the SPIRIT of GOD which reſided in him. And upon this account he is expreſsly ſaid in Scripture to be the SON of GOD. Pſal. ii. 7. *I will declare the decree; the* LORD *hath ſaid unto me, thou art my* SON, *this day have I begotten thee*; to which perhaps the apoſtle alludes here in the text, when he ſays, that CHRIST *was decreed to be the* SON *of* GOD *by his reſurrection from the dead.* To be ſure theſe words, *this day have I begotten thee,* St Paul expreſsly tells us were accompliſhed in the reſurrection of CHRIST; as if GOD, by raiſing him from the dead, had begotten him, and decreed him to be his SON. Acts xiii. 32, 33. *And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promiſe which was made unto the fathers,* GOD *hath fulfilled the ſame unto us their children, in that he hath raiſed up* JESUS *again*; as it is alſo written in the ſecond Pſalm, *thou art my* SON, *this day have I begotten thee.*

He was the SON of GOD before, as he was conceived by the HOLY GHOST; but this was ſecret and inviſible, and known only to the mother of our LORD: and therefore GOD thought fit to give a publick and viſible

demonstration of it, so as to put the matter out of all question, he declared him in a powerful manner to be his SON, by giving him a new life after death, by raising him from the dead; and by this new and evident testimony given to him, declared him again to be his SON, and confirmed the title which was given him before upon a true, but more secret account, of his being conceived by the HOLY GHOST.

And as our SAVIOUR is said to be the SON of GOD upon this twofold account, of his conception by the HOLY GHOST, and his resurrection to life by the SPIRIT of GOD: so the Scripture (which does solicitously pursue a resemblance and conformity between CHRIST and Christians) does likewise upon a twofold account (answerable to our SAVIOUR's birth and resurrection) call true believers and Christians, *the children of* GOD; viz. upon account of their regeneration or new birth, by the operation of the SPIRIT of GOD; and upon account of their resurrection to eternal life, by the power of the same SPIRIT.

Upon account of our regeneration, and becoming Christians by the power and operation of the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD upon our minds, we are said to be the children of GOD, as being regenerated and born again by the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD. And this is our first adoption. And for this reason the SPIRIT of GOD conferred upon Christians at their baptism, and dwelling and residing in them afterwards, is called *the* SPIRIT *of adoption*; Rom. viii. 15. *Ye have received the* SPIRIT *of adoption, whereby you cry abba* FATHER; and Gal. iv. 5, 6. believers are said to *receive the adoption of sons*; GOD *having sent forth the* SPIRIT *of his* SON *into their hearts, crying abba* FATHER; that is, all Christians, for as much as they are regenerated by the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, and having the SPIRIT of GOD dwelling in them, may with confidence call GOD FATHER, and look upon themselves as his children. So the apostle tells us, Rom. viii. 14. *that as many as are led* (or acted) *by the* SPIRIT *of* GOD, *are the sons of* GOD.

But

But though we are said to be the children of GOD upon account of our regeneration, and the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD dwelling and residing in Christians; yet we are eminently so, upon account of our resurrection to eternal life, by the mighty power of GOD's SPIRIT. This is our final adoption, and the consummation of it; and therefore Rom. viii. 21. this is called *the glorious liberty of the sons of* GOD, because by this we are for ever *delivered from the bondage of corruption*; and by way of eminency, *the adoption*, viz. *the redemption of our bodies.*

We are indeed *the sons of* GOD before, upon account of the regenerating and sanctifying virtue of the HOLY GHOST; but finally and chiefly upon account of our resurrection by the power of the divine SPIRIT. So St John tells us, that then we shall be declared to be *the sons of* GOD, after another manner than we are now: 1 John iii. 1. *Behold what manner of love the* FATHER *hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of* GOD. *Now we are the sons of* GOD, (that is, our adoption is begun in our regeneration and sanctification) *but it doth not yet appear what we shall be*; we shall be much more eminently so at the resurrection. *We know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.*

But the most express and remarkable text to this purpose, is, Luke xx. 36. where good men, after the resurrection, are for this reason said to be *the children of* GOD, because they are *the children of the resurrection. But they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more; for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of* GOD, *being the children of the resurrection.* For this reason they are said to be *the children of* GOD, because they are raised by him to a new life; and to be made partakers of that which is promised to them, and reserved for them. For all that are raised by the power of GOD, out of the dust of the earth, are not therefore *the children of* GOD; but only they that have part in the blessed resurrection to eternal life, and *do inherit the*

kingdom prepared for them. Not those who are raised to a perpetual death, and the *resurrection of condemnation.* These are not *the children of* GOD; but *the children of wrath,* and *the children of perdition.*

But the resurrection of the just, is the full and final declaration, that we are *the children of* GOD; not only because we are restored to a new life, but because at the resurrection, we are admitted to the full possession of that blessed inheritance which is purchased for us, and promised to us.

And the SPIRIT of GOD which is conferred upon believers in their regeneration, and afterwards dwells and resides in them, is the pledge and earnest of our final adoption, by our resurrection to eternal life; and upon this account, and no other, is said to be the earnest of our future inheritance, and the seal and confirmation of it. Eph. i. 13. *In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed by the* HOLY SPIRIT *of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession*; that is, the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD which Christians were made partakers of, upon their sincere belief of the Christian religion, is the seal and earnest of our resurrection to eternal life; as the apostle plainly tells us, in that remarkable text; Rom. viii. 11. *If the* SPIRIT *of him that raised up* JESUS *from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up* CHRIST *from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his* SPIRIT *that dwelleth in you.*

I have been the longer upon this, because it serves fully to explain to us those obscure phrases, of *the seal and earnest, and first-fruits of the* SPIRIT, which many have mistaken to import some particular and spiritual revelation or impression upon the minds of good men, assuring them of their salvation. Whereas the apostle intended no more by them, but that the SPIRIT of GOD which dwells in believers, enabling them *to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and to bring forth the fruits of the* SPIRIT, is a pledge and earnest to us, of a blessed resurrection to eternal life by the power of the SPIRIT of GOD which now dwells in us, and is the same SPIRIT which

which raised up JESUS from the dead. And in this chapter, the SPIRIT of GOD is said, ver. 16. *to bear witness to our spirits*, that is, to assure our minds, *that we are the children of* GOD; that is, that we are his children now, and consequently heirs of a glorious resurrection to eternal life: for so it follows in the next words, *and if children, then heirs, heirs of* GOD, *and joint heirs with* CHRIST; *if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.* And this being glorified together with CHRIST at the resurrection, he calls, ver. 19. *the manifestation of the sons of* GOD. Thus you see how in conformity to the SON of GOD, our elder brother, we are said to be the sons of GOD, because we are now regenerated, and shall at the last day be raised up to eternal life, by the power of the SPIRIT of GOD. I proceed to the

Second thing I propounded to speak to, for the clearing of these words, namely, in what sense CHRIST is said to be *declared, or demonstrated to be the* SON *of* GOD *by his resurrection from the dead.* By which the apostle means these two things:

1. That by his resurrection from the dead he was approved by GOD to be the true MESSIAS, and vindicated to the world from all suspicion of being a deceiver and impostor. And consequently in the

2. Place, that hereby GOD gave testimony to the truth and divinity of his doctrine.

1. By his resurrection from the dead, he was approved by GOD to be the true MESSIAS, foretold by the prophets, and expected at that time by the Jews, and sufficiently vindicated to the world to be no deceiver and impostor.

And for our fuller understanding of this, we are to consider these two things:

(1.) What the apprehensions and expectations of the Jews were concerning the MESSIAS. And

(2.) What the many crimes were which they laid to our SAVIOUR's charge, and for which they condemned him.

(1.) What the apprehensions and expectations of the Jews were concerning the MESSIAS. And it is very plain from the evangelical history, that they generally apprehended these two things of him: that the MESSIAS was to be *the* SON *of* GOD, *and the king of Israel*; and therefore that our SAVIOUR by affirming himself to be the MESSIAS, did call himself *the* SON *of* GOD, *and the king of Israel.* John i. 41. Andrew tells his brother Simon, *we have found the* MESSIAS. Ver. 45. Philip tells Nathanael, *We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write*; that is, the MESSIAS. Ver. 49. Nathanael upon discourse with our SAVIOUR, being convinced that he was the MESSIAS, owns him in these terms; *Rabbi, thou art the* SON *of* GOD, *thou art the king of Israel.* John vi. 69. Peter declares his belief that he was the CHRIST, or the MESSIAS, in these words, *we believe and are sure that thou art the* SON *of the living* GOD. This appears likewise from the high-priest's question to him, Matth. xxvi. 63. *Art thou the* CHRIST, (that is, the MESSIAS) *the* SON *of the living* GOD; or as it is in St Mark, *the* SON *of the blessed*; compared with Pilate's question, *art thou the king of the Jews?* and when he was upon the cross, some reviled him under the notion of the SON of GOD, Matth. xxvii. 40. *If thou be the* SON *of* GOD, *come down from the cross*: others under the notion of *the king of Israel*, ver. 42. *If he be the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross.* From all which it is plain that the Jews expected and believed, that the true MESSIAS was to be the SON of GOD, and the king of Israel; and whoever was not so, was a deceiver and impostor. But our SAVIOUR affirmed himself to be the true MESSIAS, and the SON of GOD. Now GOD by raising him from the dead, did abundantly vindicate him to the world, from all suspicion of imposture; and gave testimony to him, that he was all that he said of himself, viz. *the true* MESSIAS, *and the* SON *of* GOD.

Which will further appear, if we consider, (2dly,) what were the crimes which the Jews laid to our SA-

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VIOUR's charge, and for which they condemned him; and they were mainly theſe two, that by giving himſelf to be the MESSIAS, he made himſelf *king of Iſrael, and the* SON *of* GOD. Of the firſt of theſe they accuſed him to Pilate, hoping by this accuſation to make him guilty of ſedition againſt the Roman government; for ſaying, that he was *the king of Iſrael.* Of the other they accuſed him to the chief prieſts, as being guilty of blaſphemy, in that not being the MESSIAS, he called himſelf *the* SON *of* GOD. And upon this they laid the main ſtreſs, as being a thing that would condemn him by their law. They charged him with this in his life-time, as appears by thoſe words of our SAVIOUR, John x. 36. *Say ye of him whom the* FATHER *hath ſanctified, and ſent into the world, thou blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid I am the* SON *of* GOD? And when he was arraigned before the chief prieſts, they accuſed him of this, and he owning this charge, *that he called himſelf the* SON *of* GOD, upon this they judged him guilty of death. Matth. xxvi. 65, 66. *Then the high prieſt rent his clothes, and ſaid, he hath ſpoken blaſphemy; what further need have we of witneſs? behold, now ye have heard his blaſphemy, What think ye? they anſwered, he is guilty of death.* And when Pilate told them, that he found no fault in him, they ſtill inſtance in this as his crime, John xix. 7. *We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, becauſe he made himſelf the* SON *of* GOD.

Now this being the crime which was charged upon him, and for which he was crucified, and put to death; GOD, by raiſing him from the dead, and taking him up to heaven, gave teſtimony to him, that he was no impoſtor, and that he did not vainly arrogate to himſelf to be the MESSIAS, and the SON of GOD. GOD by raiſing him from the dead, by the power of the HOLY GHOST, gave a mighty demonſtration to him, that he was the SON of GOD. For which reaſon he is ſaid by the apoſtle, 1 Tim. iii. 16. to be *juſtified by the* SPIRIT. The SPIRIT gave teſtimony to him at his baptiſm, and by the mighty works that appeared in him in his life-time; but he was moſt eminently and remarkably

bly *justified by the* HOLY GHOST, *by his resurrection from the dead*; GOD hereby bearing him witness, that he was unjustly condemned, and that he assumed nothing to himself, but what of right did belong to him, when he said he was the MESSIAS, and the SON of GOD. For how could a man that was condemned to die for calling himself the SON of GOD, be more remarkably vindicated, and more clearly proved to be so, than by being raised from the dead, by the power of GOD?

And, 2dly, GOD did consequently hereby give testimony to the truth and divinity of our SAVIOUR's doctrine. Being proved by his resurrection to be the SON of GOD, this proved him to be a teacher sent by him, and what he declared to the world was the mind and will of GOD. For this none was more likely to know, and to report truly to mankind, than the SON of GOD, who came from *the bosom of his* FATHER. And because the resurrection of CHRIST is so great a testimony to the truth of his doctrine, hence it is that St Paul tells us, that the belief of this one article of CHRIST's resurrection, is sufficient to a man's salvation, Rom. x. 9. *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the* LORD JESUS, *and shalt believe in thy heart, that* GOD *hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* The reason is plain, because the resurrection of CHRIST confirmed the truth and divinity of his doctrine; so that the belief of our SAVIOUR's resurrection does by necessary consequence infer the belief of his whole doctrine. That GOD raised him from the dead, after he was condemned and put to death for calling himself the SON of GOD, is a demonstration that he really was the SON of GOD; and if he was the SON of GOD, the doctrine which he taught was true, and from GOD.

And thus I have shewn you, how the resurrection of CHRIST from the dead, is a powerful demonstration that he was the SON of GOD.

All that remains, is briefly to draw some practical inferences from the consideration of our SAVIOUR's resurrection.

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1ſt. To confirm and eſtabliſh our minds in the belief of the Chriſtian religion, of which the reſurrection of CHRIST from the dead is ſo great a confirmation. And therefore I told you that this one article is mentioned by St Paul as the ſum and abridgment of the Chriſtian faith; *if thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the* LORD JESUS CHRIST, *and believe in thy heart that* GOD *hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* The belief of our SAVIOUR's reſurrection doth by neceſſary conſequence infer the belief of his whole doctrine; for he who believes that GOD raiſed him from the dead, after he was put to death for calling himſelf the SON of GOD, cannot but believe him to be the SON of GOD; and conſequently that the doctrine which he delivered was from GOD.

2dly, The reſurrection of CHRIST from the dead aſſures us of a future judgment, and of the recompences and rewards of another world. That CHRIST was raiſed from the dead, is a demonſtration of another life after this; and no man that believes the immortality of our ſouls, and another life after this, ever doubted of a future judgment; ſo that by the reſurrection of CHRIST from the dead, GOD hath given aſſurance unto all men of a future judgment, and conſequently of the recompences and rewards of another world.

The conſideration whereof ought to have a mighty influence upon us, more eſpecially to theſe three purpoſes.

1ſt. To raiſe our minds above the preſent enjoyments of this life. Were but men convinced of this great and obvious truth, that there is an infinite difference between time and eternity, between a few days and everlaſting ages; would we but ſometimes repreſent to ourſelves, what thoughts and apprehenſions dying men have of this world, how vain and empty a thing it appears to them; how like a pageant and ſhadow it looks, as it paſſeth away from them; methinks none of theſe things could be a ſufficient temptation to any man to forget GOD and his ſoul; but notwithſtanding all the preſent delights and allurements of ſenſe, we ſhould be

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strongly intent upon the concernments of another world, and almost wholly taken up with the thoughts of the vast eternity which we are ready to enter into. For what is there in this world, this vast and howling wilderness, this rude and barbarous country which we are but to pass through, which should detain and entangle our affections, and take off our thoughts from our everlasting habitation, from that better, and that heavenly country, where we hope to live and to be happy for ever?

2dly, The consideration of the rewards of another world should comfort and support us under the troubles and afflictions of this world. The hopes of a blessed resurrection are a very proper consideration to bear us up under the evils and pressures of this life. If we hope for so great a happiness hereafter, we may be contented to bear some afflictions in this world; because the blessedness which we expect will so abundantly recompense and outweigh our present sufferings. So that the apostle assures us, Rom. viii. 18. *We know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.* The consideration whereof was that which made the primitive Christians to triumph in their sufferings, and in the midst of all their tribulations *to rejoice in the hopes of the glory of* God; because their sufferings did really prepare and make way for their glory. So the same apostle tells us, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. *Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; whilst we look not at the things which are seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

3dly, and lastly, the assurance of our future reward is a mighty encouragement to obedience and a holy life. What greater encouragement can we have than this, that all the good which we do in this world will accompany us into the other? *that when we rest from our labours, our works will follow us?* that when we shall be stripped of other things, and parted from them, these will still remain with us, and bear us company? our riches

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and honours, our ſenſual pleaſures and enjoyments, will all take their leave of us, when we leave this world; nay, many times they do not accompany us ſo far as the grave, but take occaſion to forſake us, when we have the greateſt need and uſe of them: but piety and virtue are *that better part which cannot be taken from us.* All the good actions which we do in this world will go along with us into the other, and through the merits of our REDEEMER procure for us, at the hands of a gracious and merciful GOD, a glorious and eternal reward; not according to the meanneſs of our ſervices, but according to the bounty of his mind, and the vaſtneſs of his treaſures and eſtate.

Now what an encouragement is this to holineſs and obedience, to conſider that it will all be our own another day; to be aſſured that whoever ſerves GOD faithfully, and does ſuffer for him patiently, does lay up ſo much treaſure for himſelf in another world, and provides laſting comforts for himſelf, and faithful and conſtant companions, that will never leave him nor forſake him?

Let us then do all the good we can, while we have opportunity, and ſerve GOD with all our might, knowing that no good action that we do ſhall be loſt and fall to the ground, that every grace and virtue that we exerciſe in this life, and every degree of them, *ſhall receive their full recompence at the reſurrection of the juſt.*

How ſhould this inſpire us with reſolution, and zeal, and induſtry, in the ſervice of GOD, to have ſuch a reward continually in our eye? how ſhould it tempt us to our duty, to have a crown and a kingdom offered to us, *joys unſpeakable, and full of glory, ſuch things as eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man?* And ſuch are the things which GOD hath laid up for them who love him heartily, and ſerve him faithfully in this world.

SERMON

SERMON CXXI.

The danger of apoſtaſy from Chriſtianity.

HEB. vi. 4, 5, 6.

For it is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, *and have taſted the good word of* GOD, *and the powers of the world to come; if they ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: ſeeing they crucify to themſelves the* SON *of* GOD *afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame.*

THESE words are full of difficulties, and the miſunderſtanding of them hath not only been an occaſion of a great deal of trouble, and even deſpair to particular perſons, but one of the chief reaſons why the church of Rome did for a long time reject the authority of this book; which by the way I cannot but take notice of, as a demonſtrative inſtance both of the fallible judgment of that church, and of the fallibility of oral tradition; for St Jerom more than once expreſsly tells us, "that in his time (which was "about 400 years after CHRIST) the church of Rome "did not receive this epiſtle for canonical:" but it is plain, that ſince that time, whether moved by the evidence of the thing, or (which is more probable) by the conſent and authority of other churches, they have received it, and do at this day acknowledge it for canonical; from whence one of theſe two things will neceſſarily follow; either that they were in an error for 400 years together while they rejected it; or that they have ſince erred for a long time in receiving it. One of the

is unavoidable; for if the book be canonical now, it was ſo from the beginning; for Bellarmine himſelf confeſſeth (and if he had not confeſſed it, it is nevertheleſs true and certain) that the church cannot make a book canonical, which was not ſo before; if it was not canonical at firſt, it cannot be made ſo afterward; ſo that let them chooſe which part they will, it is evident, beyond all denial, that the church of Rome hath actually erred in her judgment concerning the authority of this book; and one error of this kind is enough to deſtroy her infallibility, there being no greater evidence that a church is not infallible, than if it plainly appear that ſhe hath been deceived.

And this alſo is a convincing inſtance of the fallibility of oral tradition. For if that be infallible in delivering down to us the canonical books of Scripture, it neceſſarily follows, that whatever books were delivered down to us for canonical in one age, muſt have been ſo in all ages; and whatever was rejected in any age, muſt always have been rejected: but we plainly ſee the contrary, from the inſtance of this epiſtle, concerning which the church of Rome (which pretends to be the great and faithful preſerver of tradition) hath in ſeveral ages delivered ſeveral things. This is a peremptory inſtance both of the fallibility of the Roman church, and of her oral tradition.

Having obſerved this by the way, which I could not well paſs by upon ſo fair an occaſion, I ſhall betake myſelf to the explication of theſe words; towards which it will be no ſmall advantage to conſider the particular phraſes and expreſſions in the text. *It is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened*; that is, were ſolemnly admitted into the church by baptiſm, and embraced the profeſſion of Chriſtianity. Nothing was more frequent among the ancients, than to call baptiſm "φωτισμὸν, "illumination;" and thoſe who were baptized were called, "φωτιζόμενοι, enlightened perſons," becauſe of that divine illumination which was conveyed to the minds of men by the knowledge of Chriſtianity, the

doctrine whereof they made profeſſion of at their baptiſm. And therefore Juſtin Martyr tells us, "that by "calling upon GOD the FATHER, and the name of "our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the name of the "HOLY GHOST, ὁ φωτιζόμενος λούεται, the en-"lightened perſon is waſhed;" and again more expreſsly, "Καλεῖται δὲ τοῦτο λουτρὸν φωτισμὸς, this laver "(ſpeaking of baptiſm) is called illumination." And St Cyprian gives us the reaſon; becauſe by virtue of baptiſm *in expiatum pectus ac purum deſuper ſe lumen infundit*, "light is infuſed from above into the purified "ſoul." And that this expreſſion is ſo to be underſtood here in the text, as alſo chap. x. 32. the Syriac and Ethiopic give us good ground to believe; for they render the text thus, *it is impoſſible for thoſe who have been once baptized, and have taſted of the heavenly gift.* And at the xth chap. ver. 32. which we tranſlate, *but call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions*; that is, call to mind the former days, in which after by baptiſm ye had publickly embraced the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, ye were upon that account expoſed to many grievous ſufferings and perſecutions. So that I think there can be no great doubt, but, by *thoſe that were once enlightened*, the apoſtle means thoſe that were baptized.

To proceed then, *for it is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the* HOLY GHOST; theſe two expreſſions ſeem to denote the ſpiritual benefits and graces of the HOLY GHOST conferred upon Chriſtians by baptiſm; particularly regeneration, which is the proper work of the HOLY GHOST, and juſtification and remiſſion of ſins. So we find faith, whereby we are juſtified, called the gift of GOD, Eph. ii. 8. *Faith is the gift of* GOD; and our juſtification is called a gift, and a free gift, five ſeveral times in one chapter, Rom. v. 15, 16, 17, 18. *But not as the offence, ſo alſo is the free gift; for if through the offence of one many be dead*

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much more the grace of GOD, *and the gift by grace, which is by one man* JESUS CHRIST, *hath abounded unto many*; and what this free gift is, he tells us in the next words, viz. justification, or remission of sins, ver. 16. *And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one* JESUS CHRIST. *Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.* So that by *the heavenly gift*, I understand remission of sins, and by being *made partakers of the* HOLY GHOST, the sanctifying power and efficacy of GOD'S SPIRIT.

And have tasted the good word of GOD; that is, entertained the gospel, which is here called *the good word of* GOD; by reason of the gracious promises contained in it, particularly the promises of eternal life and happiness.

And the powers of the world to come, δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, the powers of the gospel age; that is, the miraculous powers of the HOLY GHOST, which were bestowed upon men, in order to the propagation of the gospel. And that this is the true meaning of this phrase, will, I think, be very plain to any one who shall but consider, that the word δυνάμεις is generally in Scripture used for miraculous powers and operations; and particularly to express the miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST, which were bestowed upon the apostles and first Christians; (I need not cite the particular texts for the proof of this, they are so many and so well known;) and then if we consider farther, that the times of the gospel, the days of the MESSIAS, are frequently called by the Jews *seculum futurum*, "the age to come." And indeed this is the very phrase used by the LXXII concerning our SAVIOUR, Isa. ix. 6. where he is called according to our translation, *the everlasting* FATHER, but according to that of the LXXII πατὴρ μέλλον-

τος ἀιῶνος, "the FATHER of the future age." And this very phraſe is uſed once more in this epiſtle to the Heb. chap. ii. 5. *For unto the angels hath he not put in ſubjection the world to come, whereof we now ſpeak.* He had ſaid before, *that the law was given by angels*, ver. 2. *If the word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt*; but the diſpenſation of the goſpel, which he calls *the world to come*, or the future age, was not committed to them, this was adminiſtered by the SON of GOD; *unto the angels hath he not put into ſubjection the world to come.* And 'tis obſervable, that this phraſe is only uſed in this epiſtle to the Hebrews, becauſe the Jews very well underſtood the meaning of it, being that whereby they commonly expreſſed the times of the goſpel according to that ancient tradition of the houſe of Elias, which diſtributed the duration of the world into three ἀιῶνες, or ages; the age before the law, the age under the law, and the age of the MESSIAS, which they called the *ſeculum futurum*, or "the age to come;" and which is likewiſe in Scripture called, *the laſt days, or times, and the concluſion of the ages.* Concerning which, it was particularly propheſied, that the HOLY GHOST ſhould be poured forth upon men in miraculous gifts and powers. And to this very purpoſe the prophet Joel is cited by St Peter, Acts ii. 16, 17. *This is that which was ſpoken by the prophet Joel, and it ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days (ſaith* GOD*) I will pour out of my* SPIRIT *upon all fleſh; and your ſons and your daughters ſhall propheſy*, &c. From all which it is very evident, that by *taſting of the powers of the world to come*, is meant being partakers of the miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST, which were poured forth in the goſpel age, by the Jews commonly called *the world to come.*

If they ſhall fall away, that is, if after all this they ſhall apoſtatize from this profeſſion, out of love to this preſent world, or from the fear of perſecutions and ſufferings.

It is impoſſible to renew them again to repentance; that is, it is a thing very difficult, hardly to be hoped for, that ſuch wilful and notorious apoſtates ſhould be reſtored

again by repentance. For the word ἀδύνατον, which we tranſlate "impoſſible," is not always to be taken in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, for that which abſolutely cannot be; but many times for that which is ſo very difficult, that it ſeems next to an impoſſibility. So our SAVIOUR, that which in one place he calls *exceeding hard*, viz. *for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven*, he afterwards calls *impoſſible with men*; and ſo here I underſtand the apoſtle, that thoſe who apoſtatize from Chriſtianity, after baptiſm and the benefits of it, *'tis exceeding hard to recover them again to repentance*: this phraſe "πάλιν ἀνακαινίσειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, to renew them "again to repentance," ſome underſtand of reſtoring them again to the peace and communion of the church, by a courſe of penance, ſuch as was preſcribed in the ancient church to great offenders; and then they underſtand by ἀδύνατον, not a natural, but a moral impoſſibility; that which cannot be done according to the orders and conſtitutions of the church; that is, the church did refuſe to admit apoſtates, and ſome other great offenders, as murderers and adulterers, to a courſe of penance, in order to their reconciliation with the church; this Tertullian tells us was the ſtrictneſs of the church in his time, *neque idololatriæ, neque ſanguini pax ab eccleſia redditur*; "they admitted neither ido-"laters, nor murderers to the reconciliation of the "church." Though they were never ſo penitent, and ſhed never ſo many tears, yet he ſays they were *jejunæ pacis lachrymæ*, their tears were in vain, to reconcile them to the peace and communion of the church. He ſays indeed they did not abſolutely pronounce their caſe deſperate in reſpect of GOD's pardon and forgiveneſs; *ſed de veniâ Deo reſervamus*, "for that they referred "them to GOD:" but they were never to be admitted again into the church; ſo ſtrict were many churches, and that upon the authority of this text; though the church of Rome was more moderate in this matter, and for that reaſon called the authority of this book into queſtion.

But I ſee no reaſon why theſe words ſhould primarily be underſtood of reſtoring men to the communion of the church by penance: but they ſeem to be meant of reſtoring men to the favour of GOD by repentance; of which indeed their being reſtored to the communion of the church was a good ſign. This the apoſtle ſays was very difficult, for thoſe who after baptiſm, and the ſeveral benefits of it, did apoſtatize from Chriſtianity, *to be recovered again to repentance.*

Seeing they crucify to themſelves the SON *of* GOD *afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame.* This is ſpoken by way of aggravation of the crime of apoſtaſy, that they who fall off from Chriſtianity, in effect and by interpretation do crucify *the* SON *of* GOD over again, and expoſe him to ſhame and reproach, as the Jews did; for by denying and renouncing of him, they declare him to be an impoſtor, and conſequently worthy of that death which he ſuffered, and that ignominy which he was expoſed to; and therefore, in account of GOD, they are ſaid to do that, which by their actions they do approve; ſo that it is made a crime of the higheſt nature, as if they ſhould *crucify the* SON *of* GOD, and uſe him in the moſt ignominious manner, even *tread under foot the* SON *of* GOD, as the expreſſion is to the ſame purpoſe, chap. x. 29.

Thus I have endeavoured, as briefly and clearly as I could, to explain to you the true meaning and importance of the ſeveral phraſes and expreſſions in the text; the ſenſe whereof amounts to this, that if thoſe who are baptized, and by baptiſm have received remiſſion of ſins, and do believe the doctrine of the goſpel, and the promiſes of it, and are endowed with the miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST, if ſuch perſons as theſe ſhall after all this apoſtatize from Chriſtianity, it is very hard, and next to an impoſſibility, to imagine how ſuch perſons ſhould recover again by repentance, ſeeing they are guilty of as great a crime, as if in their own perſons they had put to death and ignominiouſly uſed the SON of GOD, becauſe by rejecting of him, they declared to the world that he ſuffered deſervedly.

Having

Having thus explained the words, in order to the further vindication of them from the miſtakes and miſapprehenſions which have been about them, I ſhall endeavour to make out theſe five things.

1ſt, That the ſin here mentioned is not *the ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST.

2dly, That the apoſtle does not delare it to be abſolutely impoſſible, but only, that thoſe who are guilty of it are recovered to repentance with great difficulty.

3dly, That it is not a partial apoſtaſy from the Chriſtian religion by any particular vicious practice.

4thly, That it is a total apoſtaſy from the Chriſtian religion, and more eſpecially to the Heathen idolatry, which the apoſtle here ſpeaks of.

5thly, The reaſon of the difficulty of the recovery of thoſe who fall into this ſin.

1ſt, That the ſin here mentioned is not *the ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST, which I have heretofore diſcourſed of, and ſhewn wherein the particular nature of it does conſiſt. There are three things which do remarkably diſtinguiſh the ſin here ſpoken of in the text, from *the ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST deſcribed by our SAVIOUR.

1ſt, The perſons that are guilty of this ſin here in the text, are evidently ſuch as had embraced Chriſtianity, and had taken upon them the profeſſion of it: whereas thoſe whom our SAVIOUR chargeth with *the ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST, are ſuch as conſtantly oppoſed his doctrine, and reſiſted the evidence he offered for it.

2dly, The particular nature of *the ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST conſiſted in blaſpheming the SPIRIT, whereby our SAVIOUR wrought his miracles, and ſaying he did not do thoſe things by the SPIRIT of GOD, but by the aſſiſtance of the devil, in that malicious and unreaſonable imputing of the plain effects of the HOLY GHOST to the power of the devil, and conſequently in an obſtinate refuſal to be convinced by the miracles that he wrought: but here is nothing of all this ſo much as intimated by the apoſtle in this place.

3dly,

3dly, *The ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST is declared to be abſolutely *unpardonable, both in this world, and in that which is to come.* But this is not declared to be abſolutely unpardonable; which brings me to the

2d thing, namely, that this ſin here ſpoken of by the apoſtle, is not ſaid to be abſolutely unpardonable. It is not *the ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST; and whatever elſe it be, it is not out of the compaſs of GOD's pardon and forgiveneſs. So our SAVIOUR hath told us, *that all manner of ſin whatſoever that men hath committed is capable of pardon, excepting only the ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST. And though the apoſtle here uſes a very ſevere expreſſion, that *if ſuch perſons fall away, it is impoſſible to renew them again to repentance*; yet I have ſhewn that there is no neceſſity of underſtanding this phraſe in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word *impoſſible*; but as it is elſewhere uſed, for that *which is extremely difficult.* Nor indeed will our SAVIOUR's declaration, which I mentioned before, that all ſins whatſoever are pardonable, except *the ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST, ſuffer us to underſtand theſe words in the moſt rigorous ſenſe.

3dly, The ſin here ſpoken of, is not a partial apoſtaſy from the Chriſtian religion by any particular vicious practice. Whoſoever lives in the habitual practice of any ſin plainly forbidden by the Chriſtian law, may be ſaid ſo far to have apoſtatized from Chriſtianity; but this is not the falling away which the apoſtle here ſpeaks of. This may be bad enough, and the greater ſins any man who profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian lives in, the more notoriouſly he contradicts his profeſſion, and falls off from Chriſtianity, and the nearer he approaches to the ſin in the text, and the danger there threatened: but yet for all that, this is not that which the apoſtle ſpeaks of.

4thly, But it is a total apoſtaſy from the Chriſtian religion, more eſpecially to the Heathen idolatry, the renouncing of the true GOD, and our SAVIOUR, and the worſhip of falſe gods which the apoſtle here ſpeaks of. And this will be evident, if we conſider the occaſion

ſion and main ſcope of this epiſtle. And that was to confirm the Jews, who had newly embraced Chriſtianity, in the profeſſion of that religion; and to keep them from apoſtatizing from it, becauſe of the perſecutions and ſufferings which attended that profeſſion. It pleaſed GOD, when Chriſtianity firſt appeared in the world, to permit the powers of the world to raiſe a vehement perſecution againſt the profeſſors of it, by reaſon whereof many out of baſe fear did apoſtatize from it, and in teſtimony of their renouncing it, were forced to ſacrifice to the Heathen idols. This is that which the apoſtle endeavours to caution and arm men againſt throughout this epiſtle. Chap. ii. 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould fall away:* and chap. iii. 12. it is called *an evil heart of unbelief to apoſtatize from the living* GOD. *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief to depart from the living* GOD; that is, to fall from the worſhip of the true GOD to idolatry. And chap. x. 23. *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering, not forſaking the aſſembling of ourſelves together:* that is, not declining the aſſemblies of Chriſtians for fear of perſecution; and ver. 26. it is called *a ſinning wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth*; and ver. 39. *a drawing back to perdition.* And chap. xii. it is called by way of eminency, *the ſin which ſo eaſily beſets*; the ſin which in thoſe times of perſecution, they were ſo liable to.

And I doubt not but this is the ſin which St John ſpeaks of, and calls, *the ſin unto death*, and does not require Chriſtians *to pray for thoſe who fall into it*, with any aſſurance that it ſhall be forgiven; 1 John v. 16. *There is a ſin unto death; I do not ſay that he ſhall pray for it. All unrighteouſneſs is ſin, and there is a ſin not unto death. We know that whoſoever is born of* GOD, *ſinneth not*; that is, does not fall into the ſin of apoſtaſy from Chriſtianity to that of the Heathen idolatry: *but he that is begotten of* GOD *keepeth himſelf, and that wicked one toucheth him not*; and then ver. 21.

he

he adds this caution, *little children, keep yourſelves from idols.* Which ſufficiently ſhews what that ſin was which he was ſpeaking of before.

So that this being the ſin which the apoſtle deſigned to caution men againſt throughout this epiſtle, it is very evident what *falling away* it is he here ſpeaks of, namely, a total apoſtaſy from Chriſtianity, and more eſpecially to the Heathen idolatry.

5thly, We will conſider the reaſon of the difficulty of recovering ſuch perſons by repentance. *If they fall away, it is extremely difficult to renew them again to repentance*; and that for theſe three reaſons.

1. Becauſe of the greatneſs and heinouſneſs of the ſin.

2. Becauſe it renounceth, and caſteth off the means of recovery.

3. Becauſe it is ſo high a provocation of GOD to withdraw his grace from ſuch perſons.

1. Becauſe of the greatneſs and heinouſneſs of the ſin, both in the nature and circumſtances of it. It is downright apoſtaſy from GOD, a direct renouncing of him, and rejecting of his truth, after men have owned it, and been inwardly perſuaded and convinced of it, and ſo the apoſtle expreſſeth it in this epiſtle, calling it *an apoſtaſy from the living* GOD, *a ſinning wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth.* It hath all the aggravations that a crime is capable of, being againſt the cleareſt light and knowledge, and the fulleſt conviction of a man's mind, concerning the truth and goodneſs of that religion which he renounceth; againſt the greateſt obligations laid upon him by the grace and mercy of the goſpel; after the free pardon of ſins, and the grace and aſſiſtance of GOD'S SPIRIT received, and a miraculous power conferred for a witneſs and teſtimony to themſelves, of the undoubted truth of that religion which they have embraced. It is the higheſt affront to the SON of GOD, who revealed this religion to the world, and ſealed it with his blood; and, in effect, an expreſſion of as high malice to the author of this religion,

gion, as the Jews were guilty of when they put him to ſo cruel and ſhameful a death.

Now a ſin of this heinous nature is apt naturally either to plunge men into hardneſs and impenitency, or to drive them to deſpair; and either of theſe conditions are effectual bars to their recovery. And both theſe dangers the apoſtle warns men of in this epiſtle. Chap. iii. 12, 13. *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, to apoſtatize from the living* GOD: *but exhort one another daily, whilſt it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* Or elſe the reflexion upon ſo horrid a crime is apt to drive a man to deſpair; as it did Judas, who, after he had betrayed the SON of GOD, could find no eaſe but by making away himſelf; the guilt of ſo great a ſin filled him with ſuch terrors, that he was glad to fly to death for refuge, and to lay violent hands upon himſelf. And this likewiſe was the caſe of Spira, whoſe apoſtaſy, though it was not total from the Chriſtian religion, but only from the purity and reformation of it, brought him to that deſperation of mind, which was a kind of hell upon earth. And of this danger likewiſe the apoſtle admoniſheth, chap. xii. 15. *Looking diligently, leſt any man fail of the grace of* GOD (or as it is in our margin, *leſt any man fall from the grace of* GOD) *leſt any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up trouble you*; and then he compares the caſe of ſuch perſons to Eſau, who, when he had renounced his birthright, to which the bleſſing was annexed, was afterwards, when he would have inherited the bleſſing, rejected, and *found no place of repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears.*

2dly, Thoſe who are guilty of this ſin, do renounce and caſt off the means of their recovery; and therefore it becomes extremely difficult *to renew them again to repentance.* They reject the goſpel, which affords the beſt arguments and means to repentance, and renounce the only way of pardon and forgiveneſs. And certainly that man is in a very ſad and deſperate condition, the very

very nature of whoſe diſeaſe is to reject the remedy that ſhould cure him. And this the apoſtle tells us, was the condition of thoſe who apoſtatized from the goſpel, chap. x. 26, 27. *For if we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſary.* The great ſacrifice and propitiation for ſin was *the* SON *of* GOD? and they who renounce him, what way of expiation can they hope for afterward? what can they expect but to fall into his hands as a judge, whom they have rejected as a ſacrifice and a SAVIOUR? And then,

3dly, Thoſe who are guilty of this ſin, provoke GOD in the higheſt manner to withdraw his grace and HOLY SPIRIT from them, by the power and efficacy whereof they ſhould be brought to repentance; ſo that it can hardly otherwiſe be expected, but that GOD ſhould leave thoſe to themſelves, who have ſo unworthily forſaken him; and wholly withdraw his grace and SPIRIT from ſuch perſons as have ſo notoriouſly *offered deſpite to the* SPIRIT *of grace.*

I do not ſay that GOD always does this, he is ſometimes better to ſuch perſons than they have deſerved from him, and ſaves thoſe who have done what they can to undo themſelves, and mercifully puts forth his hand to recover them who were *drawing back to perdition*; eſpecially if they were ſuddenly ſurprized by the violence of temptation, and yielded to it not deliberately and out of choice, but merely through weakneſs and infirmity, and ſo ſoon as they reflected upon themſelves did return and repent: this was the caſe of St Peter, who being ſurprized with a ſudden fear denied CHRIST; but being admoniſhed of his ſin by the ſignal which our SAVIOUR had given him, he was recovered by a ſpeedy and hearty repentance. And ſo likewiſe ſeveral of the primitive Chriſtians, who were at firſt overcome by fear to renounce their religion, did afterwards recover themſelves, and died reſolute martyrs: but it is a very dangerous

gerous ſtate, out of which but few recover, and with great difficulty.

And thus I have done with the five things I propounded to make out, for the clearing of this text from the miſtakes and miſapprehenſions which have been about it. I ſhall now draw ſome uſeful inferences from hence by way of application, that we may ſee how far this doth concern ourſelves; and they ſhall be theſe.

1ſt, From the ſuppoſition here in the text, that ſuch perſons as are there deſcribed (namely, thoſe who have been baptized, and by baptiſm have received remiſſion of ſins, and did firmly believe the goſpel, and the promiſes of it, and were endowed with miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST) that theſe may fall away; this ſhould caution us all againſt confidence and ſecurity; when thoſe that have gone thus far may fall, *let him that ſtandeth take heed.*

Some are of opinion, that thoſe whom the apoſtle here deſcribes are true and ſincere Chriſtians, and that when he ſays, *it is impoſſible if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance,* he means that they cannot fall away totally, ſo as to ſtand in need of being renewed again to repentance: but this is directly contrary to the apoſtle's deſign, which was to caution Chriſtians againſt apoſtaſy, becauſe if they did fall away, their recovery would be ſo exceeding difficult; which argument does plainly ſuppoſe that they might fall away.

On the other hand, there are others who think the perſons, here deſcribed by the apoſtle, to be hypocritical Chriſtians, who for ſome baſe ends had entertained Chriſtianity, and put on the profeſſion of it, but not being ſincere and in good earneſt, would forſake it when perſecution came. But beſides that this is contrary to the deſcription which the apoſtle makes of theſe perſons, who are ſaid *to have taſted of the heavenly gift, and to have been made partakers of the* HOLY GHOST: by which if we underſtand juſtification and remiſſion of ſins, and the ſanctifying virtue of the HOLY GHOST, which in all probability is the meaning of theſe phraſes, theſe

are bleſſings which did not belong to hypocrites, and which GOD does not beſtow upon them; I ſay, beſides this, there is no reaſon to imagine that the apoſtle intended ſuch perſons, when it is likely that there were very few hypocrites in thoſe times of perſecution; for what ſhould tempt men to diſſemble Chriſtianity, when it was ſo dangerous a profeſſion? or what worldly ends could men have in taking that profeſſion upon them, which was ſo directly contrary to their worldly intereſts?

So that upon the whole matter, I doubt not but the apoſtle here means thoſe who are real in the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and that ſuch *might fall away*. For we may eaſily imagine, that men might be convinced of the truth and goodneſs of the Chriſtian doctrine, and in good earneſt embrace the profeſſion of it, and yet not be ſo perfectly weaned from the world, and ſo firmly rooted and eſtabliſhed in that perſuaſion, as when it came to the trial, to be able to quit all for it, and to bear up againſt all the terrors and aſſaults of perſecution; ſo that they might be real Chriſtians, and no hypocrites, though they were not ſo perfectly eſtabliſhed and confirmed, and ſo ſincerely reſolved as many others. They were not like St PAUL, and thoſe tried perſons whom he ſpeaks of, Rom. viii. 35, 37. *Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of* CHRIST? *ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword? nay, in all theſe things we are more than conquerors.* (They have been tried by all theſe, and yet had held out.) Upon which he breaks out into thoſe triumphant expreſſions; *I am perſuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of* GOD, *which is in* CHRIST JESUS *our* LORD. They might not (I ſay) be like thoſe, and yet for all that be real in their profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and no hypocrites.

In ſhort, I take them to be ſuch as our SAVIOUR deſcribes him to be *who received the ſeed into ſtony places*, namely, *he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himſelf, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the word, by and by he is offended.* This is no deſcription of a hypocrite; but of one that was real, as far as he went (for he is ſaid *to receive the word with joy*) but was not well rooted, and come to ſuch a confirmed ſtate, as reſolutely to withſtand the aſſaults of perſecution.

So that tho' we have truly embraced Chriſtianity, and are in a good degree ſincere in the profeſſion of it, yet there is great reaſon why we ſhould neither be *ſecure nor confident in ourſelves*. *Not ſecure*, becauſe there is great danger that our reſolutions may be borne down one time or other by the aſſaults of temptation, if we be not continually vigilant, and upon our guard. *Not confident in ourſelves*, becauſe, *we ſtand by faith, and faith is the gift of* GOD; therefore, as the apoſtle infers, *we ſhould not be high-minded, but fear.* Men may have gone a great way in Chriſtianity, and have been ſincere in their profeſſion of it; and yet afterwards may apoſtatize in the fouleſt manner, not only fall off to a vicious life, but even deſert the profeſſion of their religion. I would to GOD the experience of the world did not give us too much reaſon to believe the poſſibility of this. When we ſee ſo many revolt from the profeſſion of the Reformed Religion, to the corruptions and ſuperſtitions of Rome; and others from a religious and ſober life, to plunge themſelves into all kind of lewdneſs and debauchery, and it is to be feared, into atheiſm and infidelity; can we doubt any longer whether it be poſſible for Chriſtians to fall away? I wiſh we were as certain of the poſſibility of their recovery, as we are of their falling, and that we had as many examples of the one as of the other.

Let us then be very vigilant over ourſelves, and according to the apoſtle's exhortation, 2 Pet. iii. 17.

Seeing we know theſe things before, beware, leſt we alſo being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from our own ſtedfaſtneſs.

2dly, This ſhews us how great an aggravation it is, for men to ſin againſt the means of knowledge which the goſpel affords, and the mercies which it offers unto them. That which aggravated the ſin of theſe perſons was, that after they *were once enlightened*, that is, at their baptiſm were inſtructed in the Chriſtian doctrine, the cleareſt and moſt perfect revelation that ever was made of GOD's will to mankind, that after they were *juſtified freely by* GOD's *grace*, and had received remiſſion of ſins, and had many other benefits conferred upon them; that after all this, they ſhould fall off from this *holy religion*. This was that which did ſo heighten and inflame their guilt, and made their caſe ſo near deſperate. The two great aggravations of crimes are wilfulneſs and ingratitude; if a crime be wilfully committed, and committed againſt one that hath obliged us by the greateſt favours and benefits. Now he commits a fault wilfully, who does it againſt the clear knowledge of his duty. Ignorance excuſeth; for ſo far as a man is ignorant of the evil he does, ſo far the action is involuntary: but knowledge makes it to be a wilful fault. And this is a more peculiar aggravation of the ſins of Chriſtians, becauſe GOD hath afforded to them the greateſt means and opportunities of knowledge; that revelation which GOD hath made of his will to the world by our bleſſed SAVIOUR, is the cleareſt light that ever mankind had, and the mercies which the goſpel brings are the greateſt that ever were offered to the ſons of men; the free pardon and remiſſion of all our ſins, and the aſſiſtance of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT, to help the weakneſs of our nature, and enable us to do what GOD requires of us. So that we who ſin after baptiſm, after the knowledge of Chriſtianity, and thoſe great bleſſings which the goſpel beſtows on mankind, are of all perſons in the world the moſt inexcuſable. The ſins of heathens bear no proportion to ours, becauſe they never enjoyed thoſe

mean

means of knowledge, never had thoſe bleſſings conferred upon them, which Chriſtians are partakers of: ſo that we may apply to ourſelves thoſe ſevere words of the apoſtle in this epiſtle, *how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?* Hear how our SAVIOUR aggravates the faults of men upon this account, of the wilfulneſs of them, and their being committed againſt the expreſs knowledge of GOD's will; Luke xii. 47, 48. *The ſervant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes; for unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will aſk the more.* The means and mercies of the goſpel are ſo many talents committed to our truſt, of the neglect whereof a ſevere account will be taken at the day of judgment. If we be wilful offenders, there is no excuſe for us, and little hopes of pardon. *If we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth,* (ſays the apoſtle in this epiſtle) *there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin.* I know the apoſtle ſpeaks this particularly of the ſin of apoſtaſy from Chriſtianity; but it is in proportion true of all other ſins, which thoſe who have received the knowledge of the truth are guilty of. They, who after they have entertained Chriſtianity, and made ſome progreſs in it, and been in ſome meaſure reformed by it, do again relapſe into any vicious courſe, do thereby render their condition very dangerous. So St Peter tells us, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. *If after they have eſcaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the* LORD *and* SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, *they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* Therefore we may do well to conſider ſeriouſly what we do, when under the means and opportunities of knowledge which the goſpel affords us, and the ineſtimable bleſſings and favours which it confers

fers upon us, we live in any wicked and vicious courſe. Our ſins are not of a common rate, when they have ſo much of wilfulneſs and unworthineſs in them. If men ſhall be ſeverely puniſhed for living againſt the light of nature; what vengeance ſhall be poured on thoſe who offend againſt the glorious light of the goſpel? *this is the condemnation, that light is come*, &c.

3dly, The conſideration of what hath been ſaid is matter of comfort to thoſe, who upon every failing and infirmity are afraid they have committed *the unpardonable ſin*, and that it is impoſſible for them to be reſtored by repentance. There are many who being of a dark and melancholy temper, are apt to repreſent things worſe to themſelves than there is reaſon for, and do many times fancy themſelves guilty of great crimes, in the doing or neglecting of thoſe things which in their nature are indifferent, are apt to aggravate and blow up every little infirmity into an unpardonable ſin. Moſt men are apt to extenuate their ſins, and not to be ſenſible enough of the evil and heinouſneſs of them; but it is the peculiar infelicity of melancholy perſons to look upon their faults as blacker and greater than in truth they are; and whatſoever they hear and read in Scripture, that is ſpoken againſt the groſſeſt and moſt enormous offenders, they apply to themſelves; and when they hear of *the ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST, and *the ſin unto death*, or read this text which I am now treating of, they preſently conclude that they are guilty of theſe ſins, and that this is a deſcription of their caſe. Whereas *the ſin againſt the* HOLY GHOST is of that nature, that probably none but thoſe that ſaw our SAVIOUR's miracles are capable of committing it; and excepting that, there is no ſin whatſoever that is unpardonable. As for *the ſin unto death*, and that here ſpoken of in the text, I have ſhewn that they are a total apoſtaſy from the Chriſtian religion, more eſpecially to the heathen idolatry; which theſe perſons I am ſpeaking of, have no reaſon to imagine themſelves guilty of. And tho' great and notorious crimes committed by Chriſtians may come near

to this, and it may be very hard for those who are guilty of them, to recover themselves again to repentance; yet to be sure, for the common frailties and infirmities of human nature, there is an open way of pardon in the gospel, and they are many times forgiven to us upon a general repentance; so that upon account of these, which is commonly the case of the persons I am speaking of, there is not the least ground of despair; and though it be hard many times for such persons to receive comfort, yet it is easy to give it, and that upon sure grounds, and as clear evidence of Scripture, as there is for any thing, ; so that the first thing that such persons, who are so apt to judge thus hardly of themselves, are to be convinced of (if possible) is this, that they ought rather to trust the judgment of others concerning themselves, than their own imagination, which is so distempered that it cannot make a true representation of things. I know that where melancholy does mightily prevail, it is hard to persuade people of this, but till they be persuaded of it, I am sure all the reason in the world will signify nothing to them.

4thly, This should make men afraid of great and presumptuous sins, which come near apostasy from Christianity; such as deliberate murder, adultery, gross fraud and oppression, or notorious and habitual intemperance. For what great difference is there, whether men renounce Christianity, or professing to believe it, *do in their works deny it?* some of these sins which I have mentioned, particularly murder and adultery, were ranked in the same degree with apostasy by the ancient Church; and so severe was the discipline of many Churches, that persons guilty of these crimes were never admitted to the peace and communion of the Church again, whatever testimony they gave of their repentance, I will not say but this was too rigorous; but this shews how inconsistent with Christianity these crimes, and others of the like degree of heinousness, were in those days thought to be. They did not indeed, as Tertullian tells us, think such persons absolutely incapable of the

the mercy of GOD; but after ſuch a fall, ſo notorious a contradiction to their Chriſtian profeſſion, they thought it unfit afterwards that they ſhould ever be reckoned in the number of Chriſtians.

5thly, It may be uſeful for us upon this occaſion to reflect a little upon the ancient diſcipline of the Church, which in ſome places (as I have told you) was ſo ſevere, as in caſe of ſome great crimes after baptiſm, as apoſtaſy to the heathen idolatry, murder, and adultery, never to admit thoſe that were guilty of them, to the peace and communion of the Church; but all Churches were ſo ſtrict, as not to admit thoſe who fell after baptiſm into great and notorious crimes, to reconciliation with the Church, but after a long and tedious courſe of penance, after the greateſt and moſt publick teſtimonies of ſorrow and repentance, after long faſting and tears, and the greateſt ſigns of humiliation that can be imagined. In caſe of the greateſt offences they were ſeldom reconciled, till they came to lie upon their death-beds: and in caſe of other ſcandalous ſins, not till after the humiliation of many years. This perhaps may be thought too great ſeverity; but I am ſure we are as much too remiſs now, as they were over-rigorous then: but was the ancient diſcipline of the Church in any degree put in practice now, what caſe would the generality of Chriſtians be in? in what herds and ſhoals would men be driven out of the communion of the Church? 'Tis true, the prodigious degeneracy and corruption of Chriſtians hath long ſince broke theſe bounds, and 'tis morally impoſſible to revive the ſtrictneſs of the ancient diſcipline in any meaſure, till the world grow better; but yet we ought to reflect, with ſhame and confuſion of face, upon the purer ages of the Church, and ſadly to conſider, how few among us would in thoſe days have been accounted Chriſtians; and upon this conſideration to be provoked to an emulation of thoſe better times, and to a reformation of thoſe faults and miſcarriages, which in the beſt days of Chriſtianity were reckoned inconſiſtent with the Chriſtian profeſſion; and to remember that though the

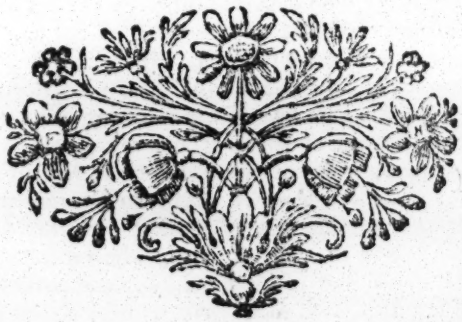
diſcipline

diſcipline of the Church be not now the ſame it was then, yet the judgment and ſeverity of God is; and that thoſe who live in any vicious courſe of life, tho' they continue in the communion of the Church, yet they ſhall be *ſhut out of the kingdom of* God. *We are ſure that the judgment of* God *will be according to truth, againſt them which commit ſuch things.*

6thly, and laſtly, The conſideration of what hath been ſaid, ſhould confirm and eſtabliſh us in the profeſſion of our holy religion. 'Tis true, we are not now in danger of apoſtatizing from Chriſtianity to the heathen idolatry; but we have too many ſad examples of thoſe who apoſtatize from the profeſſion of the goſpel, which they have taken upon them in baptiſm, to atheiſm and infidelity, to all manner of impiety and lewdneſs. There are many who daily fall off from the profeſſion of the Reformed Religion, to the groſs errors and ſuperſtitions of the Roman Church, which in many things does too nearly reſemble the old pagan idolatry. And what the apoſtle here ſays of the apoſtates of his time, is proportionably true of thoſe of our days, that *they who thus fall away*, it is *extreamly difficult to renew them again to repentance.* And it ought to be remembered, that the guilt of this kind of apoſtaſy hath driven ſome to deſpair; as in the caſe of Spira, who for reſiſting the light and convictions of his mind, was caſt into thoſe agonies, and filled with ſuch terrors, as if *the very pains of hell had taken hold on him*; and in that fearful deſpair, died in the midſt of thoſe horrors, he breathed out his ſoul.

Let us then hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering; and let us take heed how we contradict the profeſſion of our faith, by any impiety and wickedneſs in our lives; remembering that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living* God. I will conclude with the words of the apoſtle immediately after the text, *the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dreſſed, receiveth bleſſing from* God.

God. *But that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto curſing, whoſe end is to be burned.* And how gladly would I add the next words! *but, beloved, we are perſuaded better things of you, and things that accompany ſalvation, though we thus ſpeak.*



SERMO

SERMON CXXII.

CHRIST the author, and obedience the condition of ſalvation.

HEB. v. 9.

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal ſalvation unto all them that obey him.

THIS is ſpoken of CHRIST, our great high-prieſt under the goſpel; upon the excellency of whoſe perſon, and the efficacy of his ſacrifice for the eternal benefit and ſalvation of mankind, the apoſtle inſiſts ſo largely in this, and the following chapters; but the ſum of all is briefly comprehended in the text, that our high-prieſt *being made perfect, became the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him.*

In which words we have theſe four things conſiderable:

1ſt, The great bleſſing and benefit here ſpoken of, and that is *eternal ſalvation*; and this implies in it, not only our deliverance from hell, and redemption from eternal miſery; but the obtaining of eternal life and happineſs for us.

2dly, The author of this great bleſſing and benefit to mankind; and that is JESUS CHRIST *the* SON *of* GOD, who is here repreſented to us under the notion of our high-prieſt, who, by making atonement for us, and reconciling us to GOD, is ſaid to be the *author of eternal ſalvation* to mankind.

3dly, The way and means whereby he became the author of our ſalvation; *being made perfect, he became the author of eternal ſalvation.* The word is, τελειωθεὶς,

τελειωθεὶς, having conſummated his work, and finiſhed his courſe, and received the reward of it. For this word hath an alluſion to thoſe that run in a race, where he that wins receives the crown. And to this the apoſtle plainly alludes, Phil. iii. 12. where he ſays, *not as though I had already attained,* οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον, not as if I had already taken hold of the prize; but I am preſſing, or reaching forward towards it; ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι, or were already perfect; that is, not as if I had finiſhed my courſe, or had the prize or crown in my hand; but I am preſſing forward towards it. In like manner, our bleſſed SAVIOUR, when he had finiſhed the courſe of his humiliation and obedience, which was accompliſhed in his ſufferings, and had received the reward of them, being riſen from the dead, and exalted to the right-hand of GOD, and crowned with glory and honour, he is ſaid to be τελειωθεὶς made perfect; and therefore when he was giving up the ghoſt upon the croſs, he ſaid, John xix. 30. τετέλεσται, *it is finiſhed,* or perfected; that is, he had done all that was neceſſary to be done, by way of ſuffering, for our redemption. And the ſame word is likewiſe uſed Luke xiii. 32. concerning our SAVIOUR's ſufferings, *I do cures to day and to morrow,* καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ τελειοῦμαι, *and the third day I ſhall be perfected*; this he ſpake concerning his own death. And therefore chap. ii. 10. GOD is ſaid *to make the captain of our ſalvation perfect through ſufferings*; διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι. And thus our high-prieſt being made perfect in this ſenſe, that is, having finiſhed his courſe which was accompliſhed in his ſufferings, and having received the reward of them, in being exalted at the right-hand of GOD, *he became the author of eternal ſalvation to us.*

4thly, You have here the qualifications of the perſons, who are made partakers of this great benefit or the condition upon which it is ſuſpended, and that is *obedience*; *he became the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him.*

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Theſe are the main things contained in the text. For the fuller explication whereof, I ſhall take into conſideration theſe five things.

1ſt, How, and by what means CHRIST is the *author of our ſalvation.*

2dly, What obedience the goſpel requires as a condition, and is pleaſed to accept as a qualification, in thoſe who hope for eternal ſalvation.

3dly, We will conſider the poſſibility of performing this condition, by that grace and aſſiſtance which is offered, and ready to be afforded to us by the goſpel.

4thly, The neceſſity of this obedience, in order to eternal life and happineſs.

And 5thly, I ſhall ſhew that this is no prejudice to the law *of faith*, and the *free grace and mercy of* GOD, declared in the goſpel.

1ſt, We will conſider how, and by what means CHRIST *is the author of our ſalvation*; and this is contained in theſe words, *being made perfect, he became the author of eternal ſalvation*, that is (as I told you before) having finiſhed his courſe, which was accompliſhed in his laſt ſufferings; and having received the reward of them, being exalted at the right-hand of GOD, he became the *author of eternal ſalvation* to us; ſo that by all he did, and ſuffered for us, in the days of his fleſh, and in the ſtate of his humiliation, and by all that he ſtill continues to do for us, now that he is in heaven at the right-hand of GOD; he hath effected and brought about the great work of our ſalvation. His doctrine and his life, his death and ſufferings, his reſurrection from the dead, and his powerful interceſſion for us at the right-hand of GOD, have all a great influence upon the reforming and ſaving of mankind; and by all theſe ways and means, he is the author and cauſe of our ſalvation; as a rule, and as a pattern, as a price and propitiation, and as a patron and advocate that is continually pleading our cauſe, and interceding with GOD on our behalf, *for mercy and grace to help in time of need.*

And indeed our condition required an high-prieſt, who was qualified in all theſe reſpects, for the recovery of mankind out of that corrupt and degenerate ſtate into which it was ſunk; an high-prieſt *whoſe lips ſhould preſerve knowledge*, and from whoſe mouth we might learn the law of GOD; whoſe life ſhould be a perfect pattern of holineſs to us, and his death a propitiation for the ſins of the whole world; and by whoſe grace and aſſiſtance we ſhould be endowed with power and ſtrength to mortify our luſts; and to perfect holineſs in the fear of GOD; and therefore *ſuch an high-prieſt became us, who was holy, harmleſs, undefiled, and ſeparate from ſinners, who might have compaſſion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, and being himſelf compaſſed with infirmities, might have the feeling of ours, being in all points tempted as we are, only without ſin*; and, in a word, *might be able to ſave to the utmoſt all thoſe that come to* GOD *by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for us.*

By theſe qualifications our high-prieſt is deſcribed in this epiſtle; and by theſe he is every way ſuited to all our defects and infirmities, all our wants and neceſſities; to inſtruct our ignorance by his doctrine, and to lead us in the path of righteouſneſs by his moſt holy and moſt exemplary life; to expiate the guilt of our ſins by his death; and to procure grace and aſſiſtance for us, by his prevalent interceſſion on our behalf. By all theſe ways, and in all theſe reſpects, he is ſaid to be *the author of eternal ſalvation.*

1ſt, By the holineſs and purity of his doctrine, whereby we are perfectly inſtructed in the will of GOD and our duty, and powerfully excited and perſuaded to the practice of it. The rules and directions of a holy life were very obſcure before, and the motives and encouragements to virtue but weak and ineffectual, in compariſon of what they are now rendered by the revelation of the goſpel. The general corruption of mankind, the vicious practice of the world, had in a great meaſure blurred and defaced the natural law; ſo that the Heathen world

world, for many ages, had but a very dark and doubtful knowledge of their duty, especially as to several instances of it. The custom of several vices had so prevailed among mankind, as almost quite to extinguish the natural sense of their evil and deformity. And the Jews, who enjoyed a considerable degree of divine revelation, had no strict regard to the morality of their actions; and contenting themselves with some kind of outward conformity to the bare letter of the ten commandments, were almost wholly taken up with little ceremonies and observances, in which they placed the main of their religion, almost wholly neglecting the greater duties and *weightier matters of the law*.

And therefore our blessed SAVIOUR, to free mankind from these wanderings and uncertainties about the will of GOD, revealed the moral law, and explained the full force and meaning of it, clearing all doubts, and supplying all the defects of it, by a more particular and explicit declaration of the several parts of our duty, and by precepts of greater perfection, than the world was sufficiently acquainted withal before; of greater humility, and more universal charity; of abstaining from revenge, and forgiving injuries, and returning to our enemies good for evil, and love for ill-will, and blessings and prayers for curses and persecutions. These virtues indeed were sometimes, and yet but very rarely, recommended before in the counsels of wise men; but either not in that degree of perfection, or not under that degree of necessity, and as having the force of laws, and laying an universal obligation of indispensible duty upon all mankind.

And as our blessed SAVIOUR hath given a greater clearness, and certainty, and perfection, to the rule of our duty, so hath he revealed, and brought into a clearer light, more powerful motives and encouragements to the constant and careful practice of it; for *life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*; the resurrection of CHRIST from the dead being a plain and convincing demonstration of the immortality of our

ſouls, and another life after this, and an evidence to us both of his power, and of the fidelity of his promiſe, to raiſe us from the dead. Not but that mankind had ſome obſcure apprehenſions of theſe things before. Good men had always good hopes of another life, and future rewards in another world; and the worſt of men were not without ſome fears of the judgment and vengeance of another world; but men had diſputed themſelves into great doubts and uncertainties about theſe things; and as men that are in doubt, are almoſt indifferent which way they go; ſo the uncertain apprehenſions which men had of a future ſtate, and of the rewards and puniſhments of another world, had but a very faint influence upon the minds of men, and wanted that preſſing and determining force to virtue and a good life, which a firm belief and clear conviction of theſe things, would have infuſed into them.

But now *the light of the glorious goſpel of* CHRIST hath ſcattered all theſe clouds, and chaſed away that groſs darkneſs which hid the other world from our ſight, and hath removed all doubts concerning the immortality of mens ſouls, and their future ſtate; and now the kingdom of heaven, with all it's treaſures of life and happineſs, and glory, lies open to our view, and *hell is alſo naked before us, and deſtruction hath no covering.* So that the hopes and fears of men are now perfectly awakened, and all ſorts of conſiderations, that may ſerve to quicken and encourage our obedience, and to deter and affrighten men from a wicked life, are expoſed to the view of all men, and do ſtare every man's conſcience in the face. And this is that which renders the goſpel ſo admirable and powerful an inſtrument for the reforming of mankind, and, as the apoſtle calls it *the mighty power of* GOD *unto ſalvation*; becauſe therein life and immortality are ſet before us, as the certain and glorious reward of our obedience; and therein alſo *the wrath of* GOD *is revealed from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men.* So that conſidering the perfection of our rule, and the powerful enforce-

ments

ments of it upon the consciences of men, by the clear discovery and firm assurance of the eternal recompence of another world; nothing can be imagined better-suited to it's end, than the doctrine of the gospel is to make men wise, and holy, and good unto salvation; both by instructing them perfectly in their duty, and urging them powerfully to the practice of it.

2dly, The example of our SAVIOUR's life is likewise another excellent means to this end. The law lays an obligation upon us; but a pattern gives life and encouragement, and renders our duty more easy, and practicable, and familiar to us; for here we see obedience to the divine law practised in our own nature, and performed by a man like ourselves, *in all things like unto us, sin only excepted.* 'Tis true indeed, this exception makes a great difference, and seems to take off very much from the encouraging force and virtue of this example. No wonder if he that was without sin, and was GOD as well as man, performed all righteousness; and therefore, where is the encouragement of this example? that our nature, pure and uncorrupted, supported and assisted by the divinity to which it was united, should be perfectly conformed to the law of GOD, as it is no strange thing, so neither doth it seem to have that force and encouragement in it, which an example more suited to our weakness might have had. But then this cannot be denied, that it hath the advantage of perfection, which a pattern ought to have, and to which, though we can never attain, yet we may always be aspiring towards it; and certainly we cannot better learn, how GOD would have men to live, than by seeing how GOD himself lived, when he was pleased to assume our nature, and to become man.

And then, we are to consider that the SON of GOD did not assume our nature in it's highest glory and perfection, but compassed with infirmities, and liable in all points to be tempted like as we are; but still it was without sin; and therefore GOD doth not exact from us perfect obedience, and that we should *fulfil all righteousness,*

cuſneſs, as he did; he makes allowance for the corruption of our nature, and is pleaſed to accept of our ſincere, though very imperfect obedience. But, after all this, his human nature was united to his divinity, and he had the SPIRIT *without meaſure*; and this would indeed make a wide difference between us and our pattern, as to the purpoſe of holineſs and obedience, if we were deſtitute of that aſſiſtance, which is neceſſary to enable us to the diſcharge of our duty; but this GOD offers, and is ready to afford to us, for he hath promiſed *to give his* HOLY SPIRIT *to them that aſk him*; and *the* SPIRIT *of him that raiſed up* CHRIST JESUS *from the dead* dwells in all good men, who ſincerely deſire to do the will of GOD; *in the working out our ſalvation*, GOD *worketh in us both to will and to do*.

So that as to that obedience which the goſpel requires of us, if we be not wanting to ourſelves; if we do not *receive the grace of* GOD *in vain*, and *quench and reſiſt his bleſſed* SPIRIT, we may be as really aſſiſted as the SON of GOD himſelf was; for, in this reſpect, all true and ſincere Chriſtians are *the ſons of* GOD; ſo that St Paul tells us, Rom. viii. 14. *As many as are led by the* SPIRIT *of* GOD, *they are the ſons of* GOD.

So that if all things be duly conſidered, the life of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, as it is the moſt perfect, ſo in the main, it is a very proper pattern for our imitation, and could not have come nearer to us, without wanting that perfection, which is neceſſary to a complete and abſolute pattern. The SON of GOD condeſcended to every thing that might render him the moſt familiar and equal example to us, excepting that, which as it was impoſſible, ſo had been infinitely diſhonourable to him, and would have ſpoiled the perfection of his example; he came as near to us as was fit or poſſible, *being in all things like unto us, ſin only excepted*; that is, abating that one thing, which he came to deſtroy and aboliſh, and which would have deſtroyed the very end of his coming; for if he had not been *without ſin*, he could

neither

neither have made an expiation for sin, nor have been a perfect pattern of holiness and obedience.

And as the life of our blessed SAVIOUR had all the perfection that is requisite to an absolute pattern (so that by considering his temper and spirit, and the actions of his life, we may reform all the vicious inclinations of our minds, and the exorbitances of our passions, and the errors and irregularities of our lives) so it is a very powerful example, and of great force to oblige and provoke us to the imitation of it; for it is the example of one whom we ought to reverence, and have reason to love, above any person in the world: the example of our prince and sovereign lord, of our best friend and greatest benefactor, of the high-priest of our profession, and the captain of our salvation, of the author and finisher of our faith, of one who came down from heaven for our sakes, and was contented to assume our nature, together with the infirmities of it, and to live in a low and mean condition, for no other reason, but that he might have the opportunity to instruct and lead mankind in the way to life, to deliver us from sin and wrath, and to bring us to GOD and happiness. 'Tis the example of one who laid down his life for us, and sealed his love to us in his blood, and whilst we were enemies, did and suffered more for us, than ever any man did for his friend.

And surely these considerations cannot but mightily recommend and endear to us this example of our LORD and SAVIOUR. We are ambitious to imitate those whom we highly esteem and reverence, and are apt to have their examples in great veneration, from whom we have received great kindnesses and benefits, and are always endeavouring to be like those whom we love, and are apt to conform ourselves to the will and pleasure of those from whom we have received great favours, and who are continually heaping great obligations upon us.

So that whether we consider the excellency of our pattern, or the mighty endearments of it to us, by that infinite

infinite love and kindness which he hath expressed towards us, we have all the temptation, and all the provocation in the world, to endeavour to be like him; for who would not gladly tread in the steps of the SON of GOD, and of the best friend that the sons of men ever had? who will not follow that example to which we stand indebted for the greatest blessings and benefits that ever were procured for mankind? thus you see of what force and advantage the example of our blessed SAVIOUR is toward the recovery and salvation of mankind.

3dly, He is *the author of eternal salvation*, as he hath purchased it for us, by the merit of his obedience and sufferings, by which he hath obtained eternal redemption for us; not only deliverance from the wrath to come, but eternal life and happiness, when by our sins we had justly incurred the wrath and displeasure of almighty GOD, and were liable to eternal death and misery. He was contented to be substituted a sacrifice for us, *to bear our sins in his own body on the tree*, and to expiate the guilt of all our offences by his own sufferings. He died for us, that is, not only for our benefit and advantage, but in our place and stead; so that if he had not died we had eternally perished; and because he died, we are saved from that eternal ruin and punishment, which was due to us for our sins.

And this, tho' it be no where in Scripture called by the name or term of satisfaction, yet, which is the same thing in effect, it is called *the prize of our redemption*; for, as we are sinners, we are liable and indebted to the justice of GOD, and our blessed SAVIOUR by his death and sufferings hath discharged this obligation; which discharge, since it was obtained for us by *the shedding of his precious blood, without which*, the Scripture expressly says, *there had been no remission of sin*, why it may not properly enough be called payment and satisfaction, I confess I cannot understand. Not that GOD was angry with his SON, for he was always well pleased with him; or that our SAVIOUR suffered the very

very ſame which the ſinner ſhould have done in his own perſon, the proper pains and torments of the damned: but that his perfect obedience and grievous ſufferings, undergone for our ſakes, and upon our account, were of that value and eſteem with GOD, and his voluntary ſacrifice of himſelf in our ſtead, ſo highly acceptable and well-pleaſing to him, that he thereupon was pleaſed to enter into a covenant of grace and mercy with mankind; wherein he hath promiſed and engaged himſelf to forgive the ſins of all thoſe who ſincerely repent and believe, and to make them partakers of eternal life. And hence it is, that the blood of CHRIST, which was ſhed for us upon the croſs, is called *the blood of the covenant*; as being the ſanction of that new covenant of the goſpel, into which GOD is entered with mankind; and not only the confirmation, but the very foundation of it; for which reaſon, the cup in the LORD's ſupper (which repreſents to us the blood of CHRIST) is called *the New Teſtament in his blood, which was ſhed for many for the remiſſion of ſins.*

4thly, and laſtly, CHRIST is ſaid to be *the author of our ſalvation*, in reſpect of his powerful and perpetual interceſſion for us at the right-hand of GOD. And this ſeems to be more eſpecially intimated and intended, in that expreſſion here in the text, that *being made perfect, he became the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him.* Which words of *his being perfected*, do, as I have ſhewed before, more immediately refer to his ſufferings, and the reward that followed them, *his exaltation at the right-hand of* GOD, where *he lives for ever to make interceſſion for us*; by which perpetual and moſt prevalent interceſſion of his, he procures all thoſe benefits to be beſtowed upon us, which he purchaſed for us by his death; the forgiveneſs of our ſins, and our acceptance with GOD, and perfect reſtitution to his favour, upon our faith and repentance, and the grace and aſſiſtance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT to enable us to a ſincere diſcharge of our duty, to ſtrengthen us againſt all the temptations of the world, the fleſh, and the devil, to keep

keep us from all evil, and to preſerve us to his heavenly kingdom.

And this is that which our apoſtle calls *obtaining of mercy, and finding grace to help in time of need*, chap. iv. ver. 16. of this epiſt. Our bleſſed SAVIOUR now that he is advanced into heaven, and *exalted on the right-hand of the majeſty on high*, doth out of the tendereſt affection and compaſſion to mankind, ſtill proſecute that great and merciful deſign of our ſalvation, which was begun by him here on earth, and in virtue of his meritorious obedience and ſufferings does offer up our prayers to GOD, and as it were plead our cauſe with GOD, and repreſent to him all our wants and neceſſities, and obtain a favourable anſwer of our petitions put up to GOD in his name, and all neceſſary ſupplies of grace and ſtrength, proportionable to our temptations and infirmities.

And by virtue of this powerful interceſſion of our bleſſed SAVIOUR and REDEEMER, our ſins are pardoned upon our ſincere repentance, our prayers are graciouſly anſwered, our wants are abundantly ſupplied, and the grace and aſſiſtance of GOD'S SPIRIT are plentifully afforded to us, to excite us to our duty, to ſtrengthen us in well doing, to comfort us in afflictions, to ſupport us under the greateſt trials and ſufferings, and *to keep us through faith unto ſalvation.*

And for this reaſon, as the purchaſing of our ſalvation is in Scripture attributed to the death and ſufferings of CHRIST; ſo the perfecting and finiſhing of it is aſcribed to the prevalency of his interceſſion at the right-hand of GOD for us. So the apoſtle tells us, chap. vii. ver. 25. that *he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to* GOD *by him; ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for us.* He died once to purchaſe ſalvation for us; and that we may not fall ſhort of it, but receive the full benefit of this purchaſe, *he lives for ever to make interceſſion for us*; and thus *he ſaves to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to* GOD *by him*; that is, he takes care of the whole buſineſs of our ſalvation from

from firſt to laſt. And now that he is in heaven, he is as intent to procure our welfare and happineſs, and as tenderly concerned for us, as when he lived here among us upon earth, as when he hung upon croſs, and *poured out his ſoul an offering for our ſins*; for he appears at the right-hand of GOD in our nature, that which he aſſumed for our ſakes, which was made ſubject to, and ſenſible of our infirmities, and which *was tempted in all things like as we are, only without ſin*; and therefore *he knows how to pity and ſuccour them that are tempted*; and from the remembrance of his own ſufferings, is prompted to a compaſſionate ſenſe of ours, and never ceaſeth in virtue of his blood, which was ſhed for us, to plead our cauſe with GOD, and to intercede powerfully in our behalf.

So that the virtue and efficacy of CHRIST's interceſſion on our behalf, is founded in the redemption, which he wrought for us, by his blood and ſufferings; which, being entered into heaven, he repreſents to GOD on our behalf. As the high-prieſt under the law did enter into the holy place, with the blood of the ſacrifice that had been offered, and in virtue of that blood interceded for the people: *ſo* CHRIST *by his own blood entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us*: as the apoſtle ſpeaks, chap. ix. ver. 12. he entered into *the holy place*, that is, *into heaven itſelf*, to make interceſſion for us, as the apoſtle explains himſelf, ver. 24. CHRIST *is not entered into the holy places which are made with hands; but into heaven itſelf, to appear in the preſence of* GOD *for us*. And chap. x. ver. 12. ſpeaking of CHRIST's appearance for us at the right-hand of GOD, *this man* (ſays he) *after he had offered one ſacrifice for ſin for ever* (that is, a ſacrifice of perpetual virtue and efficacy) *ſat down at the right-hand of* GOD, that is, to intercede for us in virtue of that ſacrifice.

From all which it appears, that the virtue of CHRIST's mediation and interceſſion for us in heaven, is founded in his ſacrifice, and the price of our redemption

tion which he paid on earth, in ſhedding his blood for us.

From whence the apoſtle reaſons, that *there is but one mediator between* GOD *and man*, by whom we are to addreſs our prayers to GOD; 1 Tim. ii. 5. *There is but one* GOD, *and one mediator between* GOD *and men, the man* CHRIST JESUS, *who gave himſelf a ranſom for all.* His mediation is founded in his ranſom, or the price which he paid for our redemption. The apoſtle indeed does not ſay there is *but one mediator* between GOD and man in expreſs words, but ſurely he means ſo; if by ſaying *there is one* GOD, he means there is but one GOD; for they are joined together, and the very ſame expreſſion uſed concerning both; *there is one* GOD, *and one mediator between* GOD *and men*: that is, there is *but one* GOD, *and one mediator.* But then, they of the church of Rome endeavour to avoid this plain text, by diſtinguiſhing between a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of interceſſion: but now if CHRIST's mediation, by way of interceſſion, be founded in the virtue of his redemption; then if there be but one mediator of redemption, then there is but one mediator of interceſſion in heaven for us. *There is one* GOD, *and one mediator between* GOD *and men, the man* CHRIST JESUS, *who gave himſelf a ranſom for all.* So that the power and prevalency of his interceſſion is founded in his ranſom, that is, the price of our redemption; in virtue whereof alone he interceds with GOD for us, as the apoſtle to the Hebrews doth moſt plainly aſſert. So that all other interceſſors in heaven for us are excluded from offering and preſenting our prayers to GOD, beſides *our high-prieſt, who is on the right-hand of* GOD, *and lives for ever, to make interceſſion for us,* and by virtue of his interceſſion, *is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to* GOD *by him*: that is, who put up their prayers to GOD in the alone virtue of his mediation. So that as there is no need of any other, if his interceſſion be available *to ſave to the uttermoſt*: ſo there is great danger in applying to any oth

other (whether ſaint or angel, or even the bleſſed virgin) if the benefit of his interceſſion be limited to thoſe *who come to* GOD *by him*. And thus I have ſhewn by what means CHRIST is the author of our ſalvation; which was the firſt thing propoſed to be conſidered. I proceed to the

Second thing I propoſed to enquire into; namely, what obedience the goſpel requires as a condition, and is pleaſed to accept as a qualification in thoſe who hope for eternal ſalvation. And this I ſhall explain, firſt negatively, and then poſitively.

1ſt, Negatively; it is not a meer outward profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion, and owning of CHRIST for our LORD and lawgiver, that will be accepted in this caſe. *Not every one that ſaith unto me*, LORD, LORD, (ſaith our SAVIOUR) *ſhall enter into the kingdom of* GOD. By which we may very reaſonably underſtand, all that profeſſion of religion, which falls ſhort of obedience and a holy life; as the profeſſion of faith in CHRIST, being baptized into his name and religion, the mere belief of his doctrine, and the owning of him for our LORD and SAVIOUR; no, nor the external worſhip of him, and profeſſion of ſubjection to him, by prayer and hearing his word, and communicating in the holy ſacrament. No, though this be ſet off in the moſt glorious manner, by propheſying and working miracles in his name; for ſo it follows in the next words, *many ſhall ſay to me in that day*, LORD, LORD, *have we not propheſied in thy name, and in thy name have caſt out devils, and in thy name have done many wondrous works? we have eat and drunk in thy preſence, and have heard thee preach in our ſtreets.* But he tells us, that nothing of all this, without obedience to his laws, will be ſufficient to gain us admiſſion into heaven.

2dly, Poſitively; that which GOD requires as a condition, and will accept as a qualification in thoſe who hope for eternal life, is faith in CHRIST, and a ſincere and univerſal obedience to the precepts of his holy goſpel. *Not every one that ſaith unto me*, LORD, LORD,

shall enter into the kingdom of GOD: *but he that doth the will of my* FATHER *which is in heaven.* And here in the text it is expressly said, that CHRIST *is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him,* τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ, to them that hearken to him; that is, to them that do so hear and believe his gospel, as to obey it; to them, and no other, he is *the author of eternal salvation.*

And that we may the more clearly and distinctly understand what obedience it is, which the gospel exacts as an indispensible condition of eternal salvation, and a necessary qualification in all those who hope to be made partakers of it; we may be pleased to consider, that there is a virtual and an actual obedience to the laws of GOD; a perfect and sincere obedience to them; the explication of these terms, will give us a distinct conception of the things we are speaking of.

1st, There is a virtual, and there is an actual obedience to the laws of GOD. By an actual obedience, I mean the practice and exercise of the several graces and virtues of Christianity, and the course and tenor of a holy life; when *out of a good conversation men do shew forth their works,* and by the outward actions of their lives, do give real testimony of their piety, justice, sobriety, humility, meekness, and charity, and all other Christian graces and virtues, as occasion is ministered for the practice and exercise of them.

By a virtual obedience, I mean a sincere belief of the the gospel, of the holiness and equity of it's precepts, of the truth of it's promises, and the terror of it's threatenings, and a true repentance for all our sins. This is obedience in the root and principle; for he who sincerely believes the gospel, and does truly repent of the errors and miscarriages of his life, is firmly resolved to obey the commandments of GOD, and to walk before him, in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life; so that there is nothing that prevents or hinders this man's actual obedience to the laws of GOD, in the course of a holy and good life, but only the want

of time and opportunity for it. And this was the caſe of thoſe, who, upon the hearing of the goſpel when it was firſt preached to them, did heartily embrace it, and turn from their ſins, and the worſhip of idols, to the true and living GOD, but perhaps were cut off ſoon after; (as there were many, who being but newly gained to Chriſtianity, were preſently put to death, and ſuffered martyrdom for that profeſſion;) there is no doubt to be made, but that in this caſe, a virtual obedience was in ſuch perſons a ſufficient qualification for eternal life.

But where there is time and opportunity for the exerciſe of our obedience, and the practice of the virtues of a holy life, there actual obedience to the laws and precepts of the goſpel is neceſſary, to qualify us for eternal happineſs; ſo that tho' a man do ſincerely believe the goſpel, and truly repent of his ſins, and reſolve upon a better life; yet if he do not afterwards in the courſe of his life put this reſolution in practice, and *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, and amendment of life, and perſevere in a holy courſe, his firſt reſolution of obedience, though it were ſincere, will not avail him to ſalvation. Nay, if he ſhould continue for ſome time in the reſolution and practice of a holy and virtuous life, and afterwards fall off from it, and *turn from the holy commandment delivered unto him, his latter end would be worſe than his beginning*; *all his righteouſneſs that he hath done would not be remembered*; *he ſhall die in his iniquity*. For *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the* LORD. *If any man draw back*, GOD'S *ſoul will have no pleaſure in him*. This is ſo very clear and plain from Scripture, that no man can entertain any contrary perſuaſion, without contradicting the whole tenor of the Bible.

The ſum of what I have ſaid is this, that a virtual obedience and ſincere faith and repentance are ſufficient, where there is no time and opportunity for actual obedience and the practice of a good life: but where there is opportunity for actual obedience, and the continued

practice of a good life, and perſeverance therein; they are indiſpenſibly neceſſary, in order to our eternal ſalvation, and a well grounded hope and aſſurance of it.

2dly, There is a perfect, and there is a ſincere obedience. Perfect obedience conſiſts in the exact conformity of our hearts and lives to the law of GOD, without the leaſt imperfection, and without failing in any point or degree of our duty. And this obedience, as it is not conſiſtent with the frailty and infirmity of corrupt nature, and the imperfection of our preſent ſtate, ſo neither doth GOD require it of us as a neceſſary condition of eternal life. We are indeed commanded to be *perfect, as our* FATHER *which is in heaven is perfect*: but we are not to underſtand this ſtrictly and rigorouſly; for that is not only impoſſible to men in this preſent ſtate of imperfection, but abſolutely impoſſible to human nature, for *men to be perfect as* GOD *is perfect*: but the plain meaning of this precept is, that we ſhould imitate thoſe divine perfections of goodneſs, and mercy, and patience, and purity, and endeavour to be as like GOD in all theſe as we can, and be ſtill aſpiring after a nearer reſemblance of him, as may be evident to any one who conſiders the connexion and occaſion of theſe words.

By a ſincere obedience, I mean ſuch a conformity of our lives and actions to the law of GOD, as to the general courſe and tenor of them, that we do not live in the habitual practice of any known ſin, or in the cuſtomary neglect of any material or conſiderable part of our known duty; and that we be not wilfully and deliberately guilty of the ſingle act of heinous and notorious ſins, as I have formerly explained this matter more at large, in another diſcourſe. And this obedience, even in the beſt of men, is mixed with great frailty and imperfection; but yet, becauſe it is the utmoſt that we can do in this ſtate of infirmity and imperfection, the terms of the goſpel are ſo merciful and gracious, as that GOD is pleaſed, for the ſake of the meritorious obedience and ſufferings of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, to accept this ſincere, though imperfect

obedience

obedience, and to reward it with eternal life. And this, I doubt not, after all the intricate diſputes, and infinite controverſies about this buſineſs, is the true and clear ſtate of the matter.

And this ſincere obedience which the goſpel requires of us, as a condition of our happineſs, though it be ſometimes called by divines, evangelical perfection; yet it is but very improperly ſo called; for nothing is properly perfect to which any thing is wanting; and great defects and imperfections muſt needs be acknowledged in the obedience of the beſt and holieſt men upon earth; and they who pretend to perfection in this life, do neither underſtand the law of GOD, nor themſelves, but (as St John ſays of ſuch perſons) *they deceive themſelves, and the truth is not in them*; and beſides other imperfections, theſe two are evident in them, ignorance and pride.

And thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to this ſecond particular, namely, what obedience the goſpel requires as a condition, and is pleaſed to accept as a qualification for eternal life.

SERMON CXXIII.

The possibility and necessity of gospel-obedience, and it's consistence with free grace.

The second sermon on this text.

HEB. v. 9.

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

FOR the explication of these words, I proposed to consider these five things.

1st, How and by what means CHRIST is the author of our salvation.

2dly, What obedience the gospel requires as a condition, and is pleased to accept as a qualification in those who hope for eternal salvation.

3dly, The possibility of our performing this condition, by that grace and assistance which is offered, and ready to be afforded to us by the gospel.

4thly, The necessity of this obedience, in order to eternal life and happiness.

5thly, The consistency of this method and means of our salvation with the law of faith, and the free grace and mercy of GOD declared in the gospel.

I have handled the two first of these, and now proceed to the

Third thing I proposed to consider, viz. the possibility of our performing this condition, by that grace and assistance which is offered and ready to be afforded to

us by the goſpel. For if CHRIST be *the author of eternal ſalvation only to thoſe who obey him*; then thoſe who live in diſobedience to the goſpel are in a ſtate of damnation. But there cannot be the guilt of diſobedience, where obedience is impoſſible; no man being guilty, or juſtly liable to puniſhment, for the not doing of that, which it was no ways poſſible for him to do. Therefore the covenant of the goſpel, into which GOD is entered with mankind, doth neceſſarily ſuppoſe the poſſibility of performing the condition of it; otherwiſe it leaves them in as bad a condition as they were in before, becauſe it only offers new bleſſings and benefits to us, but ſets us never the nearer the obtaining of them, if ſo be the condition upon which they are granted be altogether impoſſible to us; nay, it renders our ſtate many degrees worſe, if our not performing the condition of ſuch gracious offers brings us under new and greater guilt.

If it be ſaid, that ſome perſons have great benefit by it, becauſe they by an eſpecial and effectual grace ſhall be enabled to perform the conditions of this covenant; is not this a mighty ſtraitening to the grace and mercy of the goſpel, to confine it within ſo narrow a compaſs, as ſtill to leave the greateſt part of mankind in a worſe condition, than if ſalvation had never been offered to them: as it certainly does, if (as this doctrine does neceſſarily ſuppoſe) the guilt and puniſhment of men ſhall be greatly increaſed and heightened by their contempt of, and diſobedience to the goſpel; when at the ſame time it is acknowledged, that it was not poſſible for thoſe men to obey it; for want of that ſpecial and effectual grace, which is neceſſary to enable them thereto. I do not love to handle theſe points contentiouſly, but this, in my apprehenſion, does as much derogate from the amplitude and riches of GOD's grace in the goſpel, as any thing that can eaſily be ſaid.

And therefore, for the right ſtating and clearing of this matter, I ſhall endeavour to make out theſe three things.

1. That

1. That we are not sufficient of ourselves, and by any power in us, to perform the condition of the gospel.

2. That the grace of GOD is ready to enable and assist us to the performance of these conditions, if we be not wanting to ourselves.

3. That what the grace of GOD is ready to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to ourselves, that may properly be said to be possible to us, and, in some sense, in our power.

1. That we are not sufficient of ourselves, and by any power in us, to perform the condition of the gospel. The grace of GOD doth clearly appear in the whole business of our salvation: *by grace ye are saved* (says the apostle) *and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of* GOD. *Faith is the gift of* GOD, *and so is repentance. It is* GOD *that works in us both to will and to do of his own goodness*; that is, who both inclines and excites us to that which is good, and enables us to do it. *Without me* (says CHRIST) *ye can do nothing.* And *through* CHRIST *strengthening me* (saith St Paul) *I am able to do all things*; all things which GOD requires of us, and expects to be done by us, in order to our salvation. Without the grace of CHRIST, *we are without strength; and are not sufficient of ourselves, as of ourselves, to think a good thought*; that is, we are not sufficient of ourselves to design or resolve upon any thing that is good; *but our sufficiency is of* GOD.

The depravation of our nature hath brought a great impotency and disability upon us to that which is good; and we have made ourselves much weaker by evil practice; by the power of evil habits, we are enslaved to our lusts, and *sold under sin.* So that if at any time we are convinced of our duty, and from that conviction have an inclination to that which is good, *evil is present to us.* When the law of GOD gives us the knowledge of our duty, and stares our consciences in the face, *there is another law in our members, warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin, which is in our members.* Sin brings us under

under the power of Satan, and gives him dominion over us. *For his ſervants ye are whom ye obey*; ſo that he rules and bears ſway in us, and *we are led captive by him at his pleaſure*. Evil and vicious habits are a kind of ſecond nature ſuperinduced upon us, which takes away our power and liberty to that which is good, and renders it impoſſible to us to raiſe and reſcue ourſelves; ſo that *we are priſoners and captives, 'till the* SON *of* GOD *ſets us free*; *and dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, 'till he gives us life*. And therefore the prophet repreſents the recovery of ourſelves from the bondage of ſin, by ſuch things as are naturally impoſſible, to ſhew how great our weakneſs and impotency is; Jer. xiii. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good, who are accuſtomed to do evil*. And by how much ſtronger the chains of our ſins are, and the more unable we are to break looſe from them; by ſo much the greater and more evident is the neceſſity of the divine aſſiſtance, and of the power of GOD's grace, to knock off thoſe fetters, and to reſcue us from this bondage and ſlavery.

2. The grace of GOD is ready to aſſiſt and enable us to the performance of theſe conditions, that is, to faith and repentance, and all the purpoſes of obedience and a holy life; if we be not wanting to ourſelves, and do not reject or neglect to make uſe of that grace, which GOD offers us, and is ready to afford us in a very plentiful manner. And this is that which renders all the mercies of the goſpel effectual (if it be not our own fault, and wilful neglect) to the great end and deſign of our ſalvation; and without this, all the gracious offers of the goſpel would ſignify nothing at all to our advantage.

And this likewiſe is that which renders the unbelief and impenitency and diſobedience of men utterly inexcuſable; becauſe nothing of all this does proceed from want of power, but of will to do better. And therefore this is ſo neceſſary an encouragement to all the endeavours of obedience and a good life, that men ſhould be

be assured of GOD's readiness to assist and help them in the doing of their duty, that without this the revelation of the gospel, tho' never so clear, would signify nothing to us, all the precepts and directions for a good life, and the most vehement persuasions and exhortations to obedience, would have no force and life in them; for what signifies it to direct the dead, and speak to them that cannot hear, and to persuade men, tho' it were with all the earnestness in the world, to those things which it is impossible for them to do?

Therefore our blessed SAVIOUR, when he had laid down, and explained the precepts of holiness and virtue in his sermon upon the mount, to encourage them to what he had been directing and proposing to them, he assures them that GOD is ready to afford his grace and assistance to all those that are sincerely desirous to do his will, and do earnestly implore his grace and assistance to that purpose, Math. vii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. *Ask* (saith he) *and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* So that if any man want the grace and assistance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT it is his own fault; it is either for want of seeking, or for want of earnestness in asking; for our SAVIOUR expressly assures us, that he denies it to none; *for every one that asketh, receiveth.*

And to give us a more lively and sensible assurance of this, he represents the care and kindness of GOD to men, by the affections of earthly parents to their children, who tho' they be many times evil themselves yet are not wont to deny their children necessary good things, when they decently and dutifully beg them at their hands; *what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish will give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your* FATHER *which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?* Here is a general promise and declaration

declaration, that upon our humble and earnest prayer to GOD, he will grant us whatever is good and necessary, by which is certainly intended in the first place, spiritual good things, because these are the best and most necessary; and to satisfy us that our SAVIOUR did in the first place, and more especially mean these, St Luke does particularly instance in the grace and assistance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, Luke xi. 13. *How much more shall your heavenly* FATHER *give the* HOLY SPIRIT *to them that ask him? the* HOLY SPIRIT, that is, the continual presence and influence of it to all the purposes of guidance and direction, of grace and assistance, of comfort and support in our Christian course.

And what else is the meaning of that parable of our SAVIOUR's concerning the talents intrusted with every man, according to his capacity and opportunities. Matth. xxv. I say, what else can be the meaning of it but this? that GOD is before-hand with every man, by affording the advantages and opportunities of being happy, and such a measure of grace and assistance to that end, which if he faithfully improve, he shall be admitted *into the joy of his* LORD.

And upon this consideration of the gracious promises of the gospel to this purpose, it is, that the apostle Paul doth so earnestly exhort Christians to endeavour after the highest degree of universal holiness and purity, that we are capable of in this life; 2 Cor. vii. 1. *having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of* GOD. And so likewise Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Wherefore, my beloved, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling* (that is, with great care and concernment, lest you should fall short of it) *for it is* GOD *that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* The consideration of GOD's holiness to assist us, and of his grace which is always at hand to stir up our wills to that which is good, and to strengthen us in the doing of it, ought to be a great argument and encouragement to us, to put forth our utmost

most endeavours, and so co-operate with the grace of GOD toward our own salvation.

And the apostle St Peter useth the same argument to press men to use their utmost *diligence, to make their calling and election sure,* by abounding in all the virtues of a good life, 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. *According as his divine power hath given us all things which pertain to life and godliness,* (that is, hath so plentifully furnished us with all the requisites to a godly life) *through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue* (that is, by knowledge of the gospel and the grace therein offered to us) *whereby he hath given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.* And then from the consideration of this divine power, conveyed to us by the gospel, and the promises of it, he exhorts men *to give all diligence, to add to their faith, virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly love and charity.*

And indeed the Scripture every where ascribes our regeneration and sanctification, the beginning, and progress, and perseverance of our obedience, to the powerful grace and assistance of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT: we are said to be *regenerated and born again of the* SPIRIT, *to be renewed and sanctified by the* HOLY GHOST, *to be led by the* SPIRIT, *and by the* SPIRIT *to mortify the deeds of the flesh,* and in a word, *to be kept by the mighty power of* GOD *through faith unto salvation.*

3. What the grace of GOD is ready to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to ourselves, may properly be said to be possible to us, and in some sense, in our power. That may be said to be possible to us, which tho' we *cannot do of ourselves as of ourselves,* (that is, by our own natural power) yet we can do by the help and assistance of another, if that assistance be ready to be afforded to us: as we are sure the grace of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT is, because he hath promised it to them that seek it, and *he is faithful who hath promised.*

That cannot be ſaid to be wholly out of any man's power, which he may have for aſking; that which we are able to do by the ſtrength and aſſiſtance of another, is not impoſſible to us. Surely St Paul did no ways derogate from the grace of GOD when he ſaid, *I am able to do all things through* CHRIST *ſtrengthening me*: he reckons himſelf able to do all that which by the ſtrength of CHRIST he was enabled to do.

And this is the true ground of all the perſuaſions and exhortations, which we meet with in Scripture, to holineſs and obedience, which would all be, not only to no purpoſe, but very unreaſonable, if we were wholly deſtitute of power to do what GOD commands: but if he be always ready at hand to aſſiſt us by a grace ſufficient for us, if he co-operate with us in the work of our ſalvation, then is there abundant ground of encouragement to our endeavours; and if we fall ſhort of eternal ſalvation, it is wholly our own fault; it is not becauſe GOD is wanting to us in thoſe aids and aſſiſtances of his grace which are neceſſary; but becauſe we are wanting to ourſelves, in not ſeeking GOD's grace more earneſtly, or by neglecting to make uſe of it when it is afforded to us. For it is really all one, both to the encouragement of our endeavours, and to the rendering of our diſobedience inexcuſable, whether we be able of ourſelves to perform the condition of the goſpel, or GOD be ready to aſſiſt us by his grace and HOLY SPIRIT to that purpoſe.

Wherefore, as the apoſtle exhorts, Heb. xii. 12, 13, 14, 15. *Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make ſtraight paths for your feet, leſt that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed. Follow holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the* LORD; *looking diligently leſt any man fail of the grace of* GOD; intimating, that it is want of care and diligence on our part, if the grace of GOD fail of it's end, and be not effectual to all the purpoſes of faith, and repentance, and obedience. GOD does not withhold his grace from us: but men may receive it in vain, if they do not make uſe of it. And thus I have done with

the third thing I propoſed to conſider from theſe words, I proceed to the

Fourth, *viz.* to conſider the neceſſity of this obedience, in order to our obtaining of eternal life and happineſs. CHRIST *is the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him*; that is, to ſuch, and only to ſuch, as live in obedience to the precepts of his holy goſpel, to them who frame the general courſe of their lives according to his laws. Some men ſeem to be ſo afraid of the merit of obedience and good works, that they are loth to aſſert the neceſſity of them, and do it with ſo much caution, as if they were not throughly perſuaded of it, or did apprehend ſome dangerous conſequences of it: but this fear is perfectly groundleſs; as if merit could not be excluded, without caſting off our duty, and releaſing ourſelves from any neceſſary obligation to be good. For any man ſurely may eaſily diſcern a plain difference between a worthineſs of deſert, and a fitneſs of receiving a rebel, being penitent and ſorry for what he hath done; tho' he cannot deſerve a pardon, yet he may thereby be qualified and made meet to receive it; tho' repentance do not make him worthy, yet it may make him capable of it, which an obſtinate rebel, and one that perſiſts in his diſloyalty, is not. This is a thing ſo plain of itſelf, that it would be waſte of time and words to inſiſt longer upon the proof of it.

Now the neceſſity of obedience, in order to eternal life and happineſs, relies upon theſe three grounds:

1ſt, Upon the conſtitution and appointment of GOD.

2dly, The general reaſon of rewards.

3dly, Upon the particular nature of that reward, which GOD will confer upon us for our obedience.

1ſt, The conſtitution and appointment of GOD. *Eternal life is the gift of* GOD; and he may do what he will with his own, he may diſpenſe his gifts and favours upon what terms and conditions he pleaſeth; and therefore if he hath plainly declared, that *to them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory, and honour*

and immortality, he will give eternal life; that *without holiness, no man shall see the* LORD; but *if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life*; who shall resist his will, or dispute his pleasure? The right and authority of God in this matter is so unquestionable, that it admits of no contest; and the blessings and benefits proposed, are so infinitely great and invaluable, that no condition of obtaining them, which is possible to be performed by us, can be thought hard and unequal; so that we ought thankfully to receive so great a favour, let the terms and conditions of it be what they will; and if there were no other reason for the imposing of these conditions upon us, of faith, and repentance, and obedience, but meerly the will and pleasure of GOD, this were enough to silence all objections against it.

But 2dly, The necessity of obedience, in order to eternal life, is likewise founded in the reason of rewards in general. For tho' the measure and degree of our reward so infinitely beyond the proportion of our best duty and service, as eternal life and happiness is, I say, tho' the measure and degree of this reward be founded in the immense bounty and goodness of God; yet the reason of reward in general, is necessarily founded in our obedience to GOD's laws; for according to the true nature and reason of things, nothing but obedience is capable of reward. For tho' authority may pardon the breach and transgressions of laws, and remit the punishment due thereto, yet to reward the contempt of laws, and wilful disobedience to them, is directly contrary to the design of government, and does plainly overthrow the very reason and end of all laws, and makes obedience and disobedience to be all one, if so be they are equally capable of reward: and therefore nothing can be more absurd and senseless, than for any man to hope to be rewarded by GOD, who does not live in a sincere obedience to his laws. *Every man that hath this hope in him*, (that is, in CHRIST JESUS, to be saved by him) *purifieth himself, even as he is pure*; that is, endeavours to be like him in the purity and obedience of his life: and nothing

ſurely can be more unreaſonable than to expect to be rewarded by the great governor and judge of the world, if we be diſobedient to his laws; for where obedience to law is refuſed, there all reaſon and equity of reward ceaſeth. No wiſe prince can think fit to reward diſloyalty and contempt of his laws; becauſe to reward it, would be to encourage it; much leſs will GOD, the great and infinitely wiſe governor of the world.

3dly. The neceſſity of obedience will yet more evidently appear, if we conſider the particular nature of that reward, which GOD will confer upon us for our obedience. The happineſs of heaven, which is the reward promiſed in the goſpel, is deſcribed to us by the ſight and enjoyment of GOD. Now to render us capable of this bleſſed reward, it is neceſſary that we be like GOD? but nothing but obedience and holineſs, and *being renewed after the image of him who created us in righteouſneſs* can make us like to GOD. For he that would be like GOD muſt be holy, and juſt, and good, and patient, and merciful, as GOD is; and this alone can make us capable of the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of GOD; for unleſs *we be like him, we cannot ſee him as he is*, and if we ſhould be admitted into heaven, we could not find any pleaſure and happineſs in communion with him. *Bleſſed are the pure in heart* (ſays our SAVIOUR) *for they ſhall ſee* GOD. *Without holineſs* (ſays the apoſtle) *no man ſhall ſee the* LORD. And indeed it is in the very nature of the thing impoſſible, that a wicked man (whilſt he remains ſo) ſhould ever be happy, becauſe there can be no agreeable and delightful ſociety between thoſe that are of a quite contrary temper and diſpoſition to one another, between him *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, and a ſinful and impure creature. For *what fellowſhip* (ſaith the apoſtle) *can righteouſneſs have with unrighteouſneſs? what communion hath light with darkneſs, or* GOD *with belial?* that is, with the wicked and diſobedient. 'Till we become like to GOD in the frame and temper of our minds, there can be no happy ſociety between him and us; we could

neither

neither delight ourselves in GOD, nor he take any pleasure in us; for *he is not a* GOD *that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him. The wicked shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all the workers of iniquity.* It cannot be otherwise, but that there must be an eternal jarring and discord between the righteous and holy GOD, and wicked and unrighteous men. *I will behold thy face* (says David) *in righteousness.* There is no looking GOD in the face upon any other terms. If we have been *workers of iniquity*, GOD will cast us out of his sight, and in great anger bid us to *depart from him*; and we also shall desire him to *depart from us*, being unable to bear the sight of him.

So that there is great reason why holiness and obedience should be made the conditions of eternal life and happiness, since in the very nature of the thing it is so necessary a qualification for the blessed sight and enjoyment of GOD, who to us is the cause and fountain of happiness. I come in the

Fifth and last place, to shew that this method and means of our salvation is no prejudice to the law of faith, and to the free grace and mercy of GOD declared in the gospel. The gospel is called *the law of faith, and the law of grace*, in opposition to the Jewish dispensation, which is called *the law, or covenant of works*, because it consisteth so much in external rites and observances, which were but *types and shadows of good things to come*, (as the apostle calls them in this epistle) and which when they were come, that law did expire of itself, and was out of date, the obligation and observance of it was no longer necessary; but *a better covenant, which was established upon better promises*, came in the place of it, and men were *justified by faith*, that is, by sincerely embracing the Christian religion, and were no longer under an obligation to that external, and servile, and imperfect dispensation, which consisted in circumcision, and in almost an endless number of external ceremonies. These are the works of the law so often spoken of by St Paul, concerning which the Jews had not only an

opinion of the necessity of them to a man's justification and salvation, but likewise of the merit of them; in opposition to both which opinions, St Paul calls the covenant of the gospel, *the law of faith, and the law of grace.*

But there is no where the least intimation given, either by our SAVIOUR or his apostles, that obedience to the precepts of the gospel (which are in substance the moral law cleared and perfected) is not necessary to our acceptance with GOD, and the obtaining of eternal life; but on the contrary, 'tis our SAVIOUR's express direction to the young man, who asked *what good things he should do, that he might obtain eternal life*; *if thou wilt* (says he) *enter into life, keep the commandments*; and that he might understand what commandments he meant, he instanceth in the precepts of the moral law. And indeed, the whole tenor of our SAVIOUR's sermons, and the precepts and writings of the apostles, are full and express to this purpose. *Not every one that saith unto me,* LORD, LORD, *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my* FATHER *which is in heaven. Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine* (that is, these precepts which I have delivered) *and doth them not, I will liken him to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. If ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them. In every nation, he that feareth* GOD, *and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. In* JESUS CHRIST *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith, that is acted and inspired by charity.* And that the apostle here means, *that charity or love,* which is, *the fulfilling of the law,* is evident from what he says elsewhere; *that neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but the keeping of the commandments of* GOD; in which text it is plain, that the apostle speaks of the terms of our justification, and what is available with GOD to that purpose. And St James to the same purpose,

poſe, tells us. that by the works of obedience *our faith is made perfect*, and that *faith without works is dead*; and ſurely a dead faith will neither juſtify nor ſave any man. St John likewiſe very earneſtly cautions us to take heed of any ſuch doctrine, as would take away the neceſſity of righteouſneſs and obedience; *little children* (ſays he) *let no man deceive you, he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, as he is righteous.* To all which I ſhall only add the plain words of my text, *that* CHRIST *became the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him.*

So that no man hath reaſon to fear, that this doctrine of the neceſſity of obedience to our acceptance with GOD, and the obtaining of eternal life, ſhould be any ways prejudicial to the law of faith, and the law of grace. For ſo long as theſe three things are but aſſerted and ſecured:

1ſt, That faith is the root and principle of obedience and a holy life, and that *without it, it is impoſſible to pleaſe* GOD.

2dly, That we ſtand continually in need of the divine grace and aſſiſtance to enable us to perform that obedience which the goſpel requires of us, and is pleaſed to accept in order to eternal life. And,

3dly, That the forgiveneſs of our ſins, and the reward of eternal life, are founded in the free grace and mercy of GOD, conferring theſe bleſſings upon us, not for the merit of our obedience, but only for the merit and ſatisfaction of the obedience and ſufferings of our bleſſed SAVIOUR and REDEEMER; I ſay, ſo long as we aſſert theſe three things, we give all that the goſpel any where aſcribes to faith, and to the grace of GOD revealed in the goſpel.

I have been careful to expreſs theſe things more fully and diſtinctly, that no man may imagine, that whilſt we aſſert the neceſſity of obedience and a holy life, we have any deſign to derogate in the leaſt from the faith and the grace of GOD; but only to engage and encourage men to holineſs and a good life, by convincing them

of

of the absolute and indispensible necessity of it, in order to eternal salvation. For all that I have said, is in plain english no more but this, that it is necessary for a man to be a good man, that he may get to heaven; and whoever finds fault with this doctrine, finds fault with the gospel itself, and the main end and design of the grace of GOD therein revealed to mankind, which offers salvation to men upon no other terms than these which I have mentioned; and to preach and press this doctrine, is certainly, if any thing in the world can be so, to pursue the great end and design of the Christian religion, so plainly and expressly declared by St Paul, Tit. ii. 11, 12. *The grace of* GOD *that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* And if the grace of GOD declared in the gospel have this effect upon us, then we may with confidence *wait for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great* GOD *and our* SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*; and then he adds, *these things teach and exhort, and rebuke with all authority*; that is, declare and inculcate this doctrine, and rebuke severely those who teach or practise contrary to it. And he repeats it again with a more vehement charge to Titus, to press upon men the necessity of obedience and good works, chap. iii. 8. *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in* GOD, *be careful to maintain good works.*

All that now remains, is to make some useful inferences from what hath been said upon this argument, and so to conclude this discourse.

First of all, to convince us that an empty profession of the Christian religion, how specious and glorious soever it be, if it be destitute of the fruits of obedience and a holy life, will by no means avail to bring us to heaven. No profession of faith in CHRIST, no subjection

to him, tho' we be baptized in his name, and list ourselves in the number of his disciples and followers, tho' we have made a constant profession of all the articles of the Christian faith, and have performed all the external parts and duties of religion, have gone constantly to church, and frequented the service of GOD, and have joined in publick prayers to GOD with great appearance of devotion, and have heard his word with great reverence and attention, and received the blessed sacrament with all imaginable expressions of love and gratitude to our blessed REDEEMER; nay tho' we had heard our blessed SAVIOUR himself *teach in our streets, and had eaten and drunken in his presence*; yet if all this while *we have not done the will of* GOD, and obeyed his laws, none of all these things will signify any thing to bring us to heaven, and make us partakers of that salvation, which he hath purchased for mankind.

But we cannot plead so much for ourselves, as those did, of whom our SAVIOUR speaks. None of us shall be able to alledge for ourselves at the great day, that *we had prophesied in his name, and in his name had cast out devils, and in his name had done many wonderful works*: and yet if we could alledge all this, it would do us no good. All that such can say for themselves is, that *they have called him* LORD, LORD, that is, they have made profession of his religion, and been called by his name, that they have paid an outward honour and respect to him, and declared a mighty love and affection for him: but *they have not done his will, but have hated to be reformed, and have cast his commandments behind their backs*, they have only borne the leaves of an outward profession, but *have brought forth no fruit unto holiness*, and therefore can have no reasonable expectation, that *their end should be everlasting life*. So that when these men shall appear before the great and terrible judge of the world, they shall have nothing to say, but those vain words, LORD, LORRD: to which our SAVIOUR will answer in that day, *why call ye me*, LORD, LOKD, *when ye would not do the things which I said?*

said? notwithstanding all your profession of faith in me, and subjection to me, *ye have been workers of iniquity, therefore depart from me, I know ye not whence ye are.*

Secondly, The consideration of what hath been said should stir us up to a thankful acknowledgment of what the author of our salvation hath done for us; and there is great reason for thankfulness, whether we consider the greatness of the benefit conferred upon us, or the way and manner in which it was purchased, or the easy and reasonable terms upon which it may be obtained.

1st, If we consider the greatness of the benefit conferred upon us, and that is salvation, *eternal salvation*, which comprehends in it all the blessings and benefits of the gospel, both the means and the end, our happiness, and the way to it, by *saving us from our sins*, from the guilt of them, by our justification in the blood of CHRIST; and from the power and dominion of them, by the sanctifying grace and virtue of the HOLY GHOST.

And it comprehends the end, our deliverance from hell and the wrath to come, and the bestowing of happiness upon us, a great and lasting happiness, great as our wishes, and immortal as our souls; all this is comprehended in *eternal salvation*.

2dly, If we consider the way and manner in which this great benefit was purchased and procured for us; a way of infinite kindness and condescension, in the lowest humiliation, and the unparallelled sufferings of the SON of GOD; for *never was there any sorrow like unto his sorrow, wherewith the* LORD *afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger*; in his *taking upon him the form of a servant*; and the person of a sinner, and *becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross*, which was the punishment of the vilest slaves, and most heinous malefactors. The SON of GOD came down from heaven, from the highest pitch of glory and happiness, into this lower world, this *vale of tears*, this sink of sin and sorrow; and was contented himself to suf-

ffer, to save us from eternal ruin; to be the most des-cable, and the most miserable man that ever was, at he might raise us to glory and honour, and advance to a state of the greatest happiness that human na-re is capable of.

3dly, If we consider the easy and reasonable terms on which we may be made partakers of this unspeak-le benefit, and that is by a constant and sincere and iversal obedience to the laws of GOD, which supposeth pentance towards GOD, and faith in our LORD JESUS RIST, as the root and principle of all the virtues of good life; that is, by doing that which best becomes , and which is most agreeable to the original frame of r nature, and to the dictates of our reason, and which, tting aside the consideration of our reward, is really st for our present benefit and advantage, our comfort d happiness, even in this world; for GOD, in giving ws to us, hath imposed nothing upon us, but what all reason ought to have been our choice, if he had t imposed it; nothing but what is for our good, and in it's own nature necessary to make us capable of at happiness which he hath promised to us. And hat can be more gracious, than to make one benefit e condition of a greater? than to promise to make us ppy for ever, if we will but do that, which, upon accounts, is really best and most for our advantage this present life?

Thirdly, Here is abundant encouragement given to r obedience; we have the divine assistance promised us, to enable us to the performance of the most-fficult parts of our duty; we have the HOLY SPIRIT GOD to help our infirmities, to excite us to that hich is good, and to help and strengthen us in the ing of it.

For our further encouragement we are assured of the ine acceptance, in case of our sincere obedience, not-thstanding the manifold failings and imperfections of for the sake of the perfect righteousness and obe-nce, and the meritorious sufferings of our blessed

SAVIOUR'S

SAVIOUR: and tho' *when we have done all we ca do, we are unprofitable ſervants*, and have done nothin but what was our duty, yet GOD is pleaſed to accep what we can do, becauſe it is ſincere, and to forgiv the defects and imperfections of our obedience, for h ſake, who *fulfilled all righteouſneſs*.

And beſides all this, we have the encouragement a great and everlaſting reward, infinitely beyond all pr portion of any ſervice and obedience that we can pe form. And if GOD be ready to aſſiſt and ſtrengthe us in the doing of our duty, and be willing ſo gracious to accept and to reward at ſuch a rate the ſincerity our endeavours to pleaſe him, notwithſtanding all t failings and imperfections of our beſt ſervice and ob dience; what can we poſſibly deſire more for our e couragement, to *patient continuance in well-doing*, a to be *ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, and abundant in the wo of the* LORD?

Fourthly and laſtly, The conſideration of what ha been ſaid upon this argument may ſerve ſeverely rebuke the groundleſs preſumption of thoſe, who r with ſo much confidence upon CHRIST for eternal ſa vation, without any conſcience or care to keep his co mandments; as if ſalvation lay upon his hands, and knew not how to diſpoſe of it, and were glad of one that would come and take it off upon any ter No, *he came to ſave us from our ſins, to redeem us fr all iniquity, and to purify to himſelf a peculiar pe zealous of good works*.

So that the ſalvation, which he hath purchaſed for doth neceſſarily imply our forſaking of our ſins, returning to GOD and our duty; and his death ſufferings are not more an argument of his great lov mankind, than they are a demonſtration of his per hatred of ſin. So that if we continue in the love practice of ſin, we defeat the whole deſign of coming into the world, and of all that he hath d and ſuffered for us; and the redemption, which CHR hath wrought for us, will not avail us in the l

Salvation is far from the wicked, (ſays David, Pſal. cxix. 155.) If we have been *workers of iniquity*, the SAVIOUR of the world, when he comes to judge it, will bid us *to depart from him*.

From all that hath been ſaid, it is evident, that it is the greateſt preſumption in the world for any man to hope to obtain eternal ſalvation by any device whatſoever, or in the communion of any church whatſoever, without obedience and a holy life. For tho' our obedience cannot merit; yet is neceſſary to qualify and diſpoſe us for it: tho' it does not make us ſtrictly worthy; yet it makes us *meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in light*.

SERMON CXXIV.

The authority of JESUS CHRIST, with the commiſſion and promiſe which he gave to his apoſtles.

MATTH. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

And JESUS *came and ſpake unto them, ſaying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the* FATHER, *and of the* SON, *and of the* HOLY GHOST: *teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

THESE words are the laſt that our bleſſed SAVIOUR ſpake to his apoſtles, immediately before his aſcenſion into heaven; and there are theſe three things contained in them.

I. A declaration of his own authority; *all power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth.*

II. A commiſſion to his diſciples grounded upon that authority; *go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the* FATHER, *and of the* SON, *and of the* HOLY GHOST: *teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you.*

III. A promiſe to encourage them in this work; *and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

I. Here's our SAVIOUR's declaration of his own authority; *all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* Here's an unlimited power and authority given

him over all creatures in heaven and earth. This the Scripture tells us was conferred upon him, as a reward of his ſufferings, Philip. ii. 8, 9, 10. *He humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs. Wherefore* GOD *alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of* JESUS *every knee ſhou'd bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*; that is, that all creatures, angels, and men, and devils, ſhould do homage, and acknowledge ſubjection to him.

II. Here is the commiſſion he gave to his apoſtles, by virtue of this authority; *go ye therefore and teach all nations*. The commiſſion which he here gives, is founded in the authority he had before received. Having all power committed to him, he conſtitutes and appoints the apoſtles and their ſucceſſors to manage the affairs of this his ſpiritual kingdom upon earth; and this ſeems to be the ſame commiſſion which St John mentions in other words, John xx. 21. *As my* FATHER *hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you*; that is, as my FATHER commiſſioned me before, ſo now having received full authority from him, I commiſſion you.

Now in this commiſſion, which our SAVIOUR gave to his diſciples, I ſhall take notice,

Firſt, Of the general import and deſign of it.

Secondly, A more particular declaration how they were to manage this deſign.

Firſt, The general import and deſign of this commiſſion; *go ye and teach all nations*. The word which we tranſlate teach, is μαθητεύσατε, diſciple all nations, endeavour to make all the world Chriſtians. One would think here was a power plainly enough given them, to preach the goſpel to the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. Which will more fully appear, if we compare this paſſage in St Matthew with the other evangeliſts. St Mark, chap. xvi. 15. hath it; *go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature*. From which text I ſuppoſe St Francis thought himſelf bound to preach

to beasts and birds, and accordingly did it very often, and with wonderful success, as they tell us in the legend of his life. But to extend our SAVIOUR's commission so far, is want of common sense; in which St Francis (tho' they tell us he had other gifts and graces to an eminent degree) was plainly defective.

But to proceed, St Luke, chap. xxiv. 47. tells us, our SAVIOUR commanded, that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* So that their commission did plainly extend to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews; only they were to begin with the Jews, and to preach the gospel first to them, and when they had gone over Judea and Samaria, then to pass to other nations, as St Luke doth most expressly declare, Acts i. 8. *Ye shall receive power, after that the* HOLY GHOST *is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.*

But see the strange power of prejudice, to blind the eyes even of good men, in the plainest matters. The disciples of our SAVIOUR, for all they had entertained a new religion, yet they retained the old pride and prejudice of their nation, against the rest of the world; as if none but themselves had any share in the favour of GOD, or were to have any part in the salvation of the MESSIAS.

Our SAVIOUR did so far consider this prejudice of theirs, that he never in his life-time acquainted them with this matter, so as to make them fully to understand it, because they were not able to bear it. And it is very probable, that this is one of those things which our SAVIOUR meant, John xvi. 12, 13. *I have many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when the* SPIRIT *of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.* That is, he should lead them into the knowledge of those truths, of which they were not then capable. And tho' our SAVIOUR after his resurrection, seems to have declared this so

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ciently to them; yet by their practice after his aſcenſion, it appears that they underſtood all this only of the Jews, namely, that they were to preach the goſpel firſt to the Jews that were at Jeruſalem, and in Judea, and then to thoſe that were diſperſed in other nations; for 'tis clear from the hiſtory of their firſt preaching, recorded in the Acts, that they preached to none but to the Jews, and the proſelytes of the Jewiſh religion. So ſtrong was their prejudice, that they had not the leaſt ſuſpicion that this bleſſing of the goſpel was intended for the Heathen world; nor were they convinced to the contrary 'till St Peter had a ſpecial viſion and revelation to this purpoſe, and the HOLY GHOST came upon the Gentiles in miraculous gifts, as he had done before upon the Jews that were converted to Chriſtianity. And thus the SPIRIT of GOD *led them into this truth*, and then they underſtood this command of our SAVIOUR's in a larger ſenſe. And to this St Peter plainly refers, Acts x. 42. where he tells us, how that CHRIST after his reſurrection appeared to them, and *commanded them to preach unto the people*. So likewiſe do Paul and Barnabas, Acts xiii. 46. where they ſpeak thus to the Jews, *it was neceſſary that the word ſhould firſt be preached to you, but ſeeing you put it from you, lo we turn to the Gentiles, for ſo hath the* LORD *commanded us*. Now he no where commanded this, but in this commiſſion, which he gave them before his aſcenſion.

Secondly, You have here a particular declaration how they were to manage this work of making diſciples to the Chriſtian religion.

1. By baptizing them into the Chriſtian faith.

2. By inſtructing them in the precepts and practices of Chriſtian life.

1. By baptizing them into the Chriſtian faith, which here called *baptizing them in the name of the* FATHER, *and of the* SON, *and of the* HOLY GHOST. Baptiſm is a ſolemn rite appointed by our SAVIOUR for the initiating perſons into the Chriſtian religion: but it was a ceremony in uſe before, both among the Jews and

Gentiles. The Heathens observed it at the initiating persons into their religious mysteries; and the Jews, when they admitted proselytes to their religion; at which time the males (as Maimonides tells us) were both circumcised and baptized, the women were only baptized. One circumstance of the baptism of grown persons was, that standing in the water up to the neck, they received several precepts of the law. And as the Jewish writers further tell us, this ceremony did not only belong to them that were of grown years, but to the children of the proselytes, if it were desired, upon condition, that when they came to years they should continue in that religion.

Now tho' this was a religious ceremony used both by Jews and Gentiles, and without any divine institution, that we know of, our blessed SAVIOUR (who in none of his institutions seems to have favoured unnecessary innovations) was so far from the superstition of declining it upon this account, tho' it had been in religious use both among Jews and Gentiles, that he seems rather to have chosen it for that very reason. For, seeing it was a common rite of all religions, and in itself very significant of that purity, which is the great design of all religions, it was the more likely to find the easier acceptance, and to be most suitable to that, which he intended to be the universal religion of the world.

As for the form of baptism, *in the name of the* FATHER, *of the* SON, *and of the* HOLY GHOST, it plainly refers to that short creed, or profession of faith which was required of those that were to be baptized, answerably to the reciting of the precepts of the law at the baptizing of proselytes among the Jews; now the articles of this creed were reduced to these three heads, *of the* FATHER, SON, *and* HOLY GHOST, and contains what was necessary to be believed concerning each of these. And this probably is that which the apostle calls the doctrine of baptism, Heb. vi. 2. viz. a short summary of the Christian faith, the profession where was to be made at baptism; of which the most ancient fathe

fathers make so frequent mention, calling it *the rule of faith*. It was a great while indeed before Christians tied themselves strictly to that very form of words, which we now call the apostles creed, but the sense was the same, tho' every one expressed it in his own words; nay, the same father reciting it upon several occasions, does not confine himself to the very same expressions: a plain indication that they were not then strictly bound up to any form of words, but retaining the sense and substance of the articles, every one expressed them as he pleased. So that *to baptize in the name of the* FATHER, *and of the* SON, *and of the* HOLY GHOST, is to perform this rite or sacrament by the authority of, and with special relation to, the three persons of the blessed Trinity, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, as the chief objects of the Christian faith, whereof solemn profession was then made. So that upon this form in baptism appointed by our SAVIOUR, compared with what is elsewhere said in Scripture, concerning the divinity of the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, is principally founded the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, I mean in that simplicity in which the Scripture hath delivered it, and not as it hath been since confounded and entangled in the cobwebs and niceties of the schools. The Scripture indeed no where calls them persons, but speaks of them as we do of several persons, and therefore that word is not unfitly used to express the difference between them, or at least we do not know a fitter word for that purpose.

By *baptizing them in the name of the* FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, is meant, the initiating of men by this solemn rite and ceremony into the Christian religion, upon their profession of the necessary doctrines of it concerning the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, and a solemn stipulation and engagement to live according to those doctrines: which promise of a suitable life and practice was likewise made at the same time, as Justin Martyr and other of the ancient fathers do testify.

But

But before I leave this head, it is very fit to take particular notice what use the anabaptists make of this text, so as in effect to lay the whole stress of their cause upon it; as if by virtue of this command of our SAVIOUR's, and the manner wherein it is expressed, all infants, even those of Christian parents, who are themselves already admitted in the new covenant of the gospel, were excluded from baptism, because it is here said by our SAVIOUR, *go ye, and disciple all nations, baptizing them*; from whence they infer, (and very clearly and strongly as they think) that none are to be baptized, but such as are first thoroughly instructed in the Christian religion, and made disciples, which infants are not, but only those who are grown to some maturity of years and understanding: but the opinion and practice of the ancient church in this matter, is a sufficient bar to this inference, at least to the clearness of it. And indeed it cannot reasonably be imagined, that the apostles who had all of them been bred up in the Jewish religion which constantly, and by virtue of a divine precept and institution, admitted infants into that church, and to the benefits of that covenant, by the rite of circumcision, and likewise the infants of proselytes by baptism (as I observed before) I say no man can reasonably imagine, that the apostles could understand our SAVIOUR, as intending by any consequence from this text to exclude the children of Christians out of the Christian church, and to debar them of the benefits of the new covenant of the gospel: the children of Christians being in every whit as capable of being taken into this new covenant; and of partaking of the benefits of it, as the children of the Jews were of being admitted into the old. Unless we will suppose (which at first sight seems very harsh and unreasonable) that by the terms of the Christian religion, children are in a much worse condition, than the children of the Jews were under the law. So that the parity of reason being so plain, no thing less than an express prohibition from our SAVIOUR, and an exception of children from baptism,

be thought ſufficient to deprive the children of Chriſtians of any privilege, of which the Jewiſh were capable. For the plain meaning of this commiſſion to the apoſtles is, to go and *proſelyte all nations to the Chriſtian religion*, and to admit them ſolemnly into it by baptiſm, as the Jews were wont to proſelyte men to their religion by circumciſion and baptiſm; by which rites alſo they took in the children of proſelytes, upon promiſe that when they came to years they ſhould continue in that religion. And if this was our SAVIOUR's meaning, the apoſtles had no reaſon, from the tenor of their commiſſion, to underſtand that the children of Chriſtian proſelytes were any more excluded, than the children of proſelytes to the Jewiſh religion, unleſs our SAVIOUR had expreſsly excepted them; for it is a favourable caſe, and in a matter of privilege, and therefore ought not to be determined to debar children of it, upon any obſcure conſequence from a text, which it is certain was never ſo underſtood by the Chriſtian church, for 1500 years together. I have done with the firſt part of their commiſſion, which was to diſciple or proſelyte all nations to the Chriſtian religion, and to admit them into the Chriſtian church, by the rite or ſacrament of baptiſm. I proceed to conſider the

Second part of their commiſſion, which was to inſtruct men in the precepts and duties of a Chriſtian life, *teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you*. You ſee how their commiſſion bounds and limits them, they were to teach others thoſe precepts which CHRIST had taught and delivered to them; they had no power by virtue of this commiſſion to make new laws, which ſhould be of univerſal and perpetual obligation, and conſequently neceſſary to the ſalvation of all Chriſtians; they were only to be the publiſhers, and not the authors of this new religion. And therefore St Paul, when the Corinthians conſulted him about ſeveral things relating to marriage and virginity, he only gives his advice, but would not take upon him to make a law in thoſe caſes that ſhould be binding to all Chriſtians.

And

And for the same reason Christians do generally at this day, think themselves absolved from the obligation of that canon, which was made even in a council of the apostles, as to all those branches of it, the reason whereof is now ceased. But notwithstanding this, the authority which our SAVIOUR conferred upon his apostles to teach his doctrine, does in the nature of it necessarily imply a power of governing the societies of Christians under such officers, and by such rules, as are most suitable to the nature of such a society, and most fit to promote the great ends of the Christian religion: for without this power of governing, they cannot be supposed to be endowed with sufficient authority to teach; and therefore in pursuance of this commission, we find that the apostles did govern the societies of Christians by such rules and constitutions, as were fitted to the present circumstances of Christianity. And as they did appoint temporary officers upon emergent occasions, so they constituted others that were of perpetual use in the church, for the instructing and governing of Christians; and that in such a subordination to one another, as would be most effectual to the attaining of the end of government; which subordination of governors, hath not only been used in all religions, but in all the well-regulated civil societies that ever were in the world. And thus much may suffice to have spoken of the second part of the commission.

The third and last thing in the text, is the promise which our SAVIOUR here makes for the encouragement of the apostles in this work; *lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*; that is, though I be going from you in person, yet I will still be present with you by my power and SPIRIT. And surely this must needs be a great encouragement to have him engaged for their assistance, *who had all power in heaven and earth committed to him*, as he tells them at the 18th verse.

I shall endeavour therefore, as far as the time will permit, to explain to you the true meaning and extent

of this promiſe. That it is primarily made to the apoſtles, no man can doubt, that conſiders that it was ſpoken to them immediately by our SAVIOUR; and in regard to them, the meaning of it is plainly this, that our SAVIOUR would ſend down the HOLY GHOST upon them, in miraculous gifts, to qualify and enable them for the more ſpeedy planting and propagating of the goſpel in the world, and that he would be with them, and aſſiſt them extraordinarily in this work.

And that this is the primary meaning of it, in regard to the apoſtles, will be very plain, by conſidering how this promiſe is expreſſed by the other evangeliſts; Mark xvi. 17. inſtead of this promiſe, you have theſe words, immediately after our SAVIOUR had given them commiſſion to go and preach the goſpel, *go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.* And then it follows, *these ſigns ſhall follow them that believe; in my name they ſhall caſt out devils, and ſhall ſpeak with new tongues.* And Luke xxiv. 49. inſtead of *lo, I am with you,* it is ſaid, *behold, I ſend the promiſe of my* FATHER *upon you*, that is, the miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST; as it follows in the next words, *but tarry ye in the city of Jeruſalem, until ye be endowed with power from on high.* This St Luke himſelf interprets of the promiſe of the HOLY GHOST, Acts i. 4, 5. *He commanded them that they ſhould not depart from Jeruſalem, but wait for the promiſe of the* FATHER, *which, ſaith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye ſhall be baptized with the* HOLY GHOST, not many days hence. And ver. 8. *Ye ſhall receive power after that the* HOLY GHOST *is come upon you, and ye ſhall be witneſſes unto me, both in Jeruſalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermoſt parts of the earth.* So that no man that compares theſe texts together, can doubt, but that this was the primary meaning of this promiſe, as it was made to the apoſtles.

But

But then it is as plain likewise, that this promise is to be extended farther than to the persons of the apostles, even to all those that should afterwards succeed them in this work of preaching the gospel, and baptizing, because our SAVIOUR adds, that *he would be with them to the end of the world*; which words, because they reach far beyond the apostles times, (as I shall shew by and by) must be necessarily extended to such persons in after-ages, as should carry on the same work.

There are two famous controversies about the sense of these words, in which this promise is expressed.

The first is, concerning the circumstance of time mentioned in this promise, *alway, to the end of the world.*

The other concerning the substance of the promise itself, what is meant by our SAVIOUR's *being with them.* In the first we have to deal with the enthusiasts, in the latter with the papists. I shall examine the pretences of both these, as briefly and plainly as I can.

First, concerning the circumstance of time expressed in these words, *alway, to the end of the world.* The enthusiasts would persuade us, that the meaning of these phrases is not to be extended beyond that age, and that this promise is to be limited to the apostles persons; and that the sense of it is, that CHRIST would be with the apostles, πᾶσας τὰς ἡμέρας, all their days, so long as they should live, and that would be, ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, to the end of that age; which they translate it, and with no worse design than to take away the necessity of a gospel-ministry.

But this pretence will vanish, if we can make good these two things.

1. That the letter of this promise extends farther than the persons of the apostles, and the continuance of that age.

2. However that be, it is certain that the reason of it extends to all that should succeed them in their ministry, to the end of the world.

1. The letter of this promiſe extends farther than the perſons of the apoſtles, and the continuance of that age. I will eaſily grant that the phraſe πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας, ſignifies only continually; *I will be with you continually*; but then the other phraſe, ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, until the end of the world, is ſeveral times in Scripture undeniably uſed for the end and diſſolution of all things, and cannot with any probability be ſhewn to be ever uſed otherwiſe. In this ſenſe it is unqueſtionably uſed three times, Matth. xiii. *The harveſt is the end of the world.* Ver. 39. *So ſhall it be at the end of the world.* Ver. 40. and ver. 41. it is ſaid, that at *the end of the world, the angels ſhall come forth, and ſever the wicked from the juſt, and caſt them into the furnace*; which muſt either be underſtood of the end of the world, and of the day of judgment, or there will be no clear text in the whole Bible to that purpoſe; and it is very probable, that this phraſe is uſed in the ſame ſenſe, Matth. xxiv. 3. where the diſciples aſk our SAVIOUR, *what ſhall be the ſign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* as will appear to any one that conſiders our SAVIOUR's anſwer to this queſtion; the latter part whereof cannot, without too much violence, be accommodated to any thing but the final diſſolution of the world. Now if this phraſe be every where elſe in Scripture uſed in this ſenſe, there is no reaſon why it ſhould be taken otherwiſe in the text, only to ſerve the purpoſe of an unreaſonable opinion.

I know there are phraſes very near a-kin to this, which are uſed in a quite different ſenſe, namely, for the expiration of the Jewiſh ſtate; and that we may know how to diſtinguiſh them, it is obſervable, that when the Scripture ſpeaks of the end of the world, it is called συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος, the end of the age, in the ſingular number; but when it ſpeaks of the times before the goſpel, it always expreſſeth them in the plural; the reaſon of which is, that famous tradition among the Jews, of the houſe of Elias, which diſtributed the whole duration of the world into three ages;

the age before the law, the age under the law, and the age of the MESSIAS; and this last age they looked on with great deference from the rest, as the famous and glorious age, which was to be as it were the beginning of a new world: and therefore the Jews in their writings constantly call it the *sæculum futurum*, the age or the world to come: and therefore the apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews, calls the state of the gospel by that name, as best known to them, Heb. ii. 5. *But unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come whereof we now speak*; that is, the law was given by the disposition of angels; but the dispensation of the gospel, which is called the world to come, was managed and administered by the SON of GOD. So likewise Heb. vi. 5. those miraculous powers, which accompanied the first preaching of the gospel, are called δυνάμεις τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, "the powers of the world to come," that is, of the gospel-age.

So that this last age of the gospel, is that which the Scripture by way of eminency calls *the age*; those that went before are constantly called αἰῶνες, the ages in the plural number. So we find, Eph. iii. 9. the gospel is called *the dispensation of the mystery that was hid* GOD, ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων, "from ages;" and you have the same phrase, Col. i. 26. Upon the same account the expiration of the Jewish state, is in Scripture called *the last times, and the last days*, Heb. i. 2. *But in these last days*, GOD *hath spoken to us by his* SON. 1 Cor. x. 11. *These things are written for our admonition, upon whom* τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων, *the ends of the ages are come.* In the same sense the apostle, Heb. ix. 26. speaking of CHRIST, says, that *he appeared*, ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, *at the end of the ages*, to take away sin; that is, at the conclusion of the ages which had gone before, in the last age. So that if we will be governed in the interpretation of this text, by the constant use of this phrase in Scripture, the letter of this promise will extend to the end of the world.

2.

2. But however this be, it is certain that the reaſon of this promiſe does extend to all thoſe that ſhould ſucceed the apoſtles in their miniſtry to the end of the world; I will ſuppoſe now (to give the adverſaries their utmoſt ſcope) that which we have no reaſon to grant, that the letter of this promiſe reacheth only to the apoſtles and their age, and that our SAVIOUR's meaning was no more but this, that he would ſend down the HOLY GHOST upon them in miraculous gifts, to qualify and enable them for the ſpeedy planting and propagating the goſpel in the world, and that he would be with them 'till this work was done. Now ſuppoſing there were nothing more than this intended in the letter of it, this ought not much to trouble us, ſo long as it is certain, that the reaſon of it does extend to the ſucceſſors of the apoſtles in all ages of the world. I do not mean, that the reaſon of this promiſe does give us ſufficient aſſurance, that GOD will aſſiſt the teachers and governors of his church in all ages, in the ſame extraordinary manner as he did the apoſtles, becauſe there is not the like reaſon and neceſſity for it; but that we have ſufficient aſſurance from the reaſon of this promiſe, that GOD will not be wanting to us, in ſuch ſtanding and neceſſary aſſiſtance, as the ſtate of religion, and the welfare of it in every age ſhall require: for can we imagine that GOD would uſe ſuch extraordinary means to plant a religion in the world, and take no care of it afterwards? that he who had begun ſo good a work, ſo great and glorious a deſign, would let it fall to the ground for want of any thing that was neceſſary to the ſupport of it?

This is reaſonable in itſelf; but we are not alſo without good ground for thus extending the general reaſon of particular promiſes beyond the letter of them. The apoſtle hath gone before us in this, for Heb. xiii. 5, 6. where there extends two particular promiſes of the Old Teſtament to all Chriſtians, *let your converſation* (ſays he) *be without covetouſneſs, and be content with ſuch things as ye have: for he hath ſaid, I will never leave*

thee nor forsake thee. And again, *the* LORD *is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.* These promises were made to particular persons; the first of them to Joshua, and the other to David; but yet the apostle applies them to all Christians, and to good men in all ages, because the general ground and reason of them extended so far. He who gave Joshua and David this encouragement to their duty, will certainly be as good to us, if we do ours.

And thus I have done with the first controversy about the sense of these words, which concerns the circumstances of time mentioned in this promise, *alway, even the end of the world*, and have plainly shewn that both the letter and the reason of this promise does extend farther than the persons of the apostles, and the continuance of that age, even to all that should succeed them in their ministry to the end of the world. I come now to consider,

Secondly, the substance of the promise itself, namely what is meant by our SAVIOUR's *being with them*. And here our adversaries of the church of Rome would fain persuade us, that this promise is made to the church of Rome, and that the meaning of it is, that the church should always be infallible, and never err in the faith. But as there is no mention of the church of Rome in this promise, nor any where else in Scripture upon the like occasion, whereby we might be directed to understand this promise to be made to that church; so to any unprejudiced person the plain and obvious sense of this promise can be no other than this, that our SAVIOUR having commissioned the apostles to go and preach the Christian religion in the world, he promises to assist them in this work, and those that should succeed them in it, *to the end of the world*. But how any man can construe this promise, so as to make it signify the perpetual infallibility of the Roman church, I cannot for my life devise, and yet this is one of the main texts upon which they build that old and tottering fabric of their infallibility.

H

Here is a general promiſe of aſſiſtance to the paſtors and governors of the Church, in all ages to the end of the world; but that this aſſiſtance ſhall always be to the degree of infallibility, (as it was to the apoſtles) can neither be concluded from the letter of this promiſe, nor from the reaſon of it; much leſs can it be from hence concluded, that the aſſiſtance here promiſed, if it were to the degree of infallibility, is to be limited and confined to the ſupreme paſtor and governor of the Roman church,

That the aſſiſtance here promiſed ſhall always be to the degree of infallibility, can by no means be concluded from the letter of this promiſe. Indeed there is no pretence or colour for it; he muſt have a very peculiar ſagacity, that can find out in theſe words, *I am with you always*, a promiſe of infallible aſſiſtance. Is not the promiſe which GOD made to Joſhua, and which the apoſtle to the Hebrews applies to all Chriſtians, and to all good men in all ages, *I will never leave thee nor forſake thee*, the very ſame in ſenſe with this, *I will be with you always?* and yet ſurely, no man did ever imagine, that by virtue of this promiſe, every Chriſtian, and every good man is infallible.

But neither can it be inferred from the reaſon of this promiſe, that this aſſiſtance ſhall always be to the degree of infallibility. It was ſo indeed to the apoſtles; the miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST, which were beſtowed upon them for the more ſpeedy and effectual planting and propagating of the goſpel in the world, were a divine teſtimony and confirmation to the doctrine which they delivered; and having this divine teſtimony given to them, we are certain that they were ſecured from error in the delivery of that doctrine. So that the apoſtles had no other infallibility, but what depended upon, and was evidenced by the miraculous gifts wherewith they were endowed; and therefore without the like gifts, none can with reaſon pretend to the like infallibility: for infallibility ſignifies an extraordinary aſſiſtance of GOD'S SPIRIT, whereby thoſe who

are thus assisted are secured from error. This every confident man may, if he pleaseth, pretend to; but no man is to be believed to have it, but he who can give such evidence of it, as is fit to satisfy reasonable men, that he hath it. Now the only sufficient evidence of such an extraordinary divine assistance is the power of miracles. This indeed is the great external testimony of a teacher come from GOD, *if he do such works as none can do, except* GOD *be with him*; and this evidence the prophets of old, and our SAVIOUR, and his apostles always gave of their infallibility. And if the Pope and general councils can give the testimony of such miracles for their infallibility, as Moses, and our SAVIOUR, and his apostles did work, we are ready to acknowledge it. Such a testimony as this would give the world a thousand times more satisfaction concerning their infallibility, than all the subtle arguments of Bellarmine, and all their writers. But if they cannot, they may dispute about it to the end of the world; and every man that hath but the same confidence may pretend to it with as much reason as they do.

But to proceed in my argument, here is a plain reason why this extraordinary assistance should be granted to the apostles at first; and another reason as plain, why it should not be continued afterwards. It was reasonable and in some degree necessary, that the apostles should be thus assisted at the first publication of the gospel, namely, to give satisfaction to the world, that they were faithful and true witnesses of the doctrine and miracles of CHRIST. But since this doctrine and these miracles are recorded to posterity, by those very persons that were thus assisted, here is as plain a reason, why after the gospel was planted and established in the world this infallibility should cease. So long as we have an infallible foundation of faith, namely, the divine revelation consigned in writing, and transmitted down to us by testimony of undoubted credit, what need is there now of a fixed and standing infallibility in the Church

but having handled this argument more at large elſewhere, I ſhall inſiſt no farther upon it here.

I have now done with the three things I propounded to diſcourſe upon from this text. You have heard what authority our SAVIOUR had given him; what commiſſion he gave to his diſciples; and what aſſiſtance he hath promiſed to the paſtors and governors of his Church to the end of the world: namely, ſuch an aſſiſtance as is ſuitable to the exigencies of the Church, in the ſeveral ages and ſtates of Chriſtianity; which aſſiſtance was at firſt very extraordinary and miraculous. GOD was pleaſed to give witneſs to the firſt teachers and publiſhers of the goſpel, *with ſigns and wonders and divers miracles, and gifts of the* HOLY GHOST; and this at firſt was in a very great degree neceſſary, it not being otherwiſe imaginable, how Chriſtianity could have borne up againſt all that force and violent oppoſition which was uſed againſt it: but this extraordinary aſſiſtance was but temporary and tranſient diſpenſation. GOD did, as it were, paſs by *in the ſtrong and mighty wind, in the earthquake, and in the fire:* but he was in the *ſtill voice*, that is, he deſigned to ſettle and continue that diſpenſation, by that more calm and ſecret way of aſſiſtance, which offers leſs violence to the nature of man, but which was intended for the conſtant and permanent diſpenſation. So that we have no reaſon to think, that GOD hath now forſaken his Church, tho' he be not with it in ſo viſible and extraordinary a manner.

But then if any particular church deſire and expect his bleſſed preſence and aſſiſtance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, we muſt remember, that there is a condition to be performed on our parts. For how abſolute ſoever this promiſe may be, in reſpect of the Church Univerſal; it is certainly conditional to any particular Church, as experience in many inſtances hath ſhewn. GOD hath long ſince left the Church of Jeruſalem, where the goſpel was firſt publiſhed; he hath left the Church of Antioch, where the believers of the goſpel were firſt called Chriſtians; he hath left the famous Churches of

Aſia,

Asia, to that degree of desolation, that the ruins and places of some of them are hardly at this day certainly known. And this may also be the fate of any particular Church, not excepting Rome herself, for all her pride and confidence to the contrary. *Behold therefore the goodness and severity of* God: *towards them that fell severity; but towards us goodness, if we continue in his goodness, otherwise we also shall be cut off.*

This, as I observed before, is spoken particularly to the Roman Church; the apostle supposeth that the Church of Rome herself may be guilty of apostasy from the faith, and cut off by unbelief, and indeed seems to foretel it; which how it consists with their confident pretence to infallibility, let them look to it.

And let all particular churches look to themselves that they do not forfeit this promise of divine assistance. For Christ hath not so tied himself to any particular Church, but that if they forsake him, he may leave them, and *remove his candlestick from them.* There have been many sad instances of this, since the first planting of Christianity; and we have no small reason to apprehend that it may come to be our own case; for certainly we have many of those marks of ruin among us, which did foretel the destruction of the Jewish Church and nation, horrible profaneness and contempt of religion, division and animosities to the highest degree, and an universal dissoluteness and corruption of manners. And why should we, who do the same things, think ourselves exempted from the same fate? what can we expect, but that God should deal with us, as he did with them, *take away the kingdom of* God *from us, and give it to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it?*

The condition of this great promise here in the text to the pastors and governors of the Christian Church, is the faithful execution of their commission; if they sincerely endeavour to gain men to the belief and practice of Christianity, Christ hath promised to be with them. The performance of this condition doth principally concern the chief governors of the Church, as

next to them the miniſters of the goſpel in general, that they ſhould be diligent and faithful in their reſpective ſtations, *teaching men to obſerve all things whatſoever* CHRIST *hath commanded*. And if we would make this our great work, to inſtruct our reſpective charges in the neceſſary doctrines of faith, and the indiſpenſible duties of a good life, we ſhould have far leſs trouble with them about other matters. And that we may do this work effectually, we muſt be ſerious in our inſtructions, and exemplary in our lives. *Serious in our inſtructions*; this certainly the apoſtle requires in the higheſt degree, when he chargeth miniſters, *ſo to ſpeak, as the oracles of* GOD, to which nothing can be more contrary, than to trifle with the word of GOD, and to ſpeak of the weightieſt matters in the world, the great and everlaſting concernments of the ſouls of men, in ſo light and indecent a manner, as is not only beneath the gravity of the pulpit, but even of a well-regulated ſtage. Can any thing be more unſuitable, than to hear a miniſter of GOD from the ſolemn place to break jeſts upon ſin, and to quibble upon the vices of the age? this is to ſhoot without a bullet, and as if we had no mind to do execution, but only to make men ſmile at the mention of their faults; this is ſo nauſeous a folly, and of ſo pernicious conſequence to religion, that hardly any thing ſo ſevere can be ſaid of it.

And then if we would have our inſtructions effectual, we muſt be *exemplary in our lives*. Ariſtotle tells, that the manners of the ſpeaker have κυριοτάτην πίςιν, the moſt ſovereign power of perſuaſion. And therefore Cato puts it into the definition of an orator, that he is, *vir bonus, dicendi peritus*, "a good man, and an eloquent ſpeaker." This is true as to all kinds of perſuaſion; the good opinion which men have of the ſpeaker, gives great weight to his words, and does ſtrangely diſpoſe the minds of men to entertain his counſels. But the reputation of goodneſs is more eſpecially neceſſary and uſeful to thoſe whoſe proper work it is to perſuade men to be good; and therefore the apoſtle, when

when he had charged Titus to put men in mind of their duty, immediately adds, *in all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works.* None so fit to teach others their duty, and none so likely to gain men to it, as those who practise it themselves; because hereby we convince men that we are in earnest, when they see that we persuade them to nothing, but what we choose to do ourselves. This is the way to *stop the mouths of men*, and to confute their malice, by an exemplary piety and virtue. So St Peter tells us, 1 Pet. ii. 15. *For so is the will of* God, *that by well-doing ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*

SERMON CXXV.

The difficulties of a Chriſtian life conſidered.

LUKE xiii. 24.

Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.

THERE are two great miſtakes about the nature of religion, equally falſe, and equally pernicious to the ſouls of men: and the devil, thoſe great deſign it is to keep men off from religion y any means, makes uſe of both theſe miſtakes, to rve his own purpoſe and deſign upon the ſeveral tem-ers of men. Thoſe who are melancholy and ſerious, e diſheartens and diſcourageth from attempting it, by e extreme trouble and difficulty of it, repreſenting it ſo horrid and frightful a ſhape, incumbered with ſuch ficulties, and attended with ſuch troubles and ſuffer-gs, as are inſuperable, and intolerable to human na-re; whereby he perſuades men, that they had better ver attempt it, ſince they may deſpair to go through ith it.

On the other hand, thoſe who are ſanguine and full hopes, he poſſeſſes with a quite contrary apprehen-n; that the buſineſs of religion is ſo ſhort and eaſy a ork, that it may be done at any time, and if need be, the laſt moment of our lives, tho' it is not ſo well to t it upon the laſt hazard; and by this means, a great rt of mankind are lulled in ſecurity, and adjourn the ſineſs of religion from time to time; and becauſe it is eaſy, and ſo much in their power, they ſatisfy themſelves

ſelves with an indeterminate reſolution to ſet about tha
buſineſs ſome time or other before they die, and ſo t
repent, and make their peace with GOD once fo
all.

Theſe pretences contradict one another, and therefo
cannot be both true, but they may both be falſe, as in
deed they are, and truth lies between them; religio
being neither ſo ſlight and eaſy a work as ſome wou
have it, nor ſo extremely difficult and intolerable,
others would repreſent it. To confute the falſe appr
henſions which ſome have of the eaſineſs of it, our SA
VIOUR tells us there muſt be ſome ſtriving; and to ſ
tisfy us, that the difficulties of religion are not ſo gre
and inſuperable, as ſome would make them, our SA
VIOUR tells us, that thoſe who *ſtrive*, ſhall ſucceed a
enter in; but thoſe who only *ſeek*, that is, do not vig
rouſly ſet about the buſineſs of religion, but only ma
ſome faint attempts to get to heaven, *ſhall not be able*
enter in. Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for ma
I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, but ſhall not
able.

The occaſion of which words of our bleſſed SAVIOU
was a queſtion, that was put to him, by one of his d
ciples, concerning the number of thoſe, that ſhould
ſaved, ver. 23. One ſaid unto him, LORD, *are t*
few that be ſaved? To which curious queſtion,
SAVIOUR (according to his manner, when ſuch kind
queſtions were put to him) does not give a direct
ſwer, becauſe it was neither neceſſary, nor uſeful for
hearers to be reſolved in, it did not concern them,
know what number of perſons ſhould be ſaved,
what courſe they ſhould take that they might be of t
number; and therefore, inſtead of ſatisfying their
rioſities, he puts them upon their duty; admoniſh
them, inſtead of concerning themſelves what ſhould
come of others, to take care of themſelves. *An*
ſaid unto them, ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate;
many, I ſay unto you, ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhal
be able. He does not ſay, that *but few ſhall be ſav*

(as ſome have preſumptuouſly ventured to determine) but only few in compariſon of thoſe *many, that ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.*

In theſe words we may conſider theſe two things.

Firſt, the duty enjoined, *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate.*

Secondly, the reaſon or argument to enforce it, *for many ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.*

Firſt, the duty enjoined; *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate.* Which words being metaphorical, I ſhall ſtrip them of the metaphor, that ſo we may ſee the plain meaning of them. Now by this metaphor, or rather allegory, theſe three things are plainly intended.

1ſt, The courſe of a holy and Chriſtian life, in order to the obtaining of eternal happineſs, is here repreſented to us by a way, which every man, that would come to heaven, muſt walk in. For ſo St Matthew (who expreſſeth this more fully) makes mention of a way, as well as a gate, by which we muſt enter into it; *ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth to life.* And this, tho' it be not expreſſed by St Luke, is neceſſarily underſtood, *ſtrive to enter in by the ſtrait gate*, that is, into the way that leads to life.

2dly, The firſt difficulties of a holy and religious courſe of life, are here repreſented to us, *by a ſtrait gate.* For the gate at which we enter, and the way in which we walk, can ſignify nothing elſe, but the beginning and progreſs of a holy and religious courſe.

3dly, Our diligence and conſtancy in this courſe, are repreſented by ſtriving, a word which hath a great force and emphaſis in it, ἀγωνιζεσθε. a metaphor taken from the earneſt contention which was uſed in the Olympick games, by thoſe who ſtrove for maſtery in running or wreſtling, or any of the other exerciſes which were there uſed.

Secondly, Here is a reaſon added to enforce the exhortation or duty; *for many ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able:* that is, there are a great many that will do ſomething in Chriſtianity, and make ſome faint

attempts to get to heaven, who yet ſhall fall ſhort of it for want of ſuch a firm reſolution and earneſtneſs of en deavour, as is neceſſary to the attaining of it.

Having thus explained the words, I ſhall take occa ſion from the firſt part of them, namely, the duty o exhortation, to handle theſe three points, very uſef for us to conſider, and to be well inſtructed in.

1ſt, The difficulties of a holy and Chriſtian courſe.

2dly, The firm reſolution and earneſt endeavour th is required on our part for the conquering of theſe di ficulties.

3dly, That theſe difficulties are not ſo great and i ſuperable, as to be a juſt diſcouragement to our ende vours; if we will ſtrive, we may maſter them.

Firſt, the difficulties of a holy and Chriſtian cour And theſe are either from ourſelves, or from ſomethi without us.

1. From ourſelves, from the original corruption a depravation of our nature, and the power of evil hab and cuſtoms, contracted by vicious practices. Our n tures are vitiated and depraved, inclined to evil, and i potent to good; beſides, that being habituated to ſin a vice, it is a matter of infinite difficulty to break of cuſtom, and to turn the courſe of our life another w Now becauſe this is the difficulty of our firſt entrance to religion, it is repreſented by *a ſtrait gate*, which hard to get through.

2. There are likewiſe other difficulties from withou as namely, the oppoſition and perſecution of the wor which was very raging and violent in the firſt beginni of Chriſtianity. And this our SAVIOUR repreſents the ruggedneſs and roughneſs of the way, as St Matth expreſſeth it, chap. vii. 14. *Strait is the gate, and n row is the way that leads to life*, Καὶ τεθλιμμένη ὁδὸς, *confragoſa eſt via*, (ſo Grotius renders it) the w is craggy, full of afflictions and troubles.

So that theſe are the two great difficulties in a Ch ſtian courſe, indiſpoſition from within, and oppoſit from without.

1. In

1. Indiſpoſition from within. And this makes religion ſo much the more difficult, becauſe it checks us at our very firſt entrance upon our Chriſtian courſe, and makes us unwilling to ſet out. The corruption of our nature, and thoſe vicious habits which by a long cuſtom of ſin we have contracted, do ſtrongly incline us to the contrary way, ſo that a man muſt offer great force and violence to himſelf that will conquer this difficulty. It is one of the hardeſt things in the world to break off a vicious habit, and to get looſe from the tyranny of cuſtom. The prophet Jeremiah ſpeaks of it, as next to a natural impoſſibility, chap. xiii. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin? or the leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good that are accuſtomed to do evil.* This requires great ſtriving indeed. Nothing ſhews the ſpirit and reſolution of a man more, than to contend with an inveterate habit: for in this caſe a man ſtrives againſt the very bent and inclination of his ſoul; and 'tis eaſier to fight a man againſt all the world, than to make him fight with himſelf: and yet this every man muſt do, who from any wicked courſe of life, betakes himſelf ſeriouſly to religion; he muſt as it were lay violent hands upon himſelf, and fight with the man he was before; and this the ſcripture is emphatically expreſſed to us, by *crucifying the old man, with the affections and luſts thereof.* A Chriſtian when he firſt enters upon a holy and good courſe of life, is repreſented as two perſons or parties at civil war one with another, *the old, and the new man*; and that whoever will be a Chriſtian muſt put off himſelf, and become another man; and 'tis no eaſy matter for a man to quit himſelf.

2. In our Chriſtian courſe, we muſt likewiſe expect to meet with great oppoſition from without. Bleſſed be God, Chriſtianity hath generally been for many ages free from this difficulty, which attended the firſt profeſſion of it; it was then indeed a very ſteep and craggy way, very rough and thorny, not to be travelled in without flesh and blood; then the dangers and hazards of that profeſſion were ſuch, as were not to be encountered

by a mere moral reſolution, and the natural ſtrength of fleſh and blood; the perſecution that attended it was ſo hot, and the torments which threatened it ſo terrible, that the ſenſual and inconſiderate part of mankind would rather venture hell at a diſtance than run themſelves upon ſo preſent and evident danger.

But ſince theſe ages of perſecution, this difficulty hath been in a great meaſure removed. Not but the true religion hath ſtill it's enemies in the world; but they are not let looſe, as they were in thoſe times; it is ſtill perſecuted and expoſed to the malice and reproach, but not to the rage and fury, of unreaſonable men. In the calmeſt times there is hardly any man can be a ſtrict and ſincere Chriſtian, without being liable to hatred and contempt, without denying himſelf many of the worldly advantages, which thoſe who make no conſcience of the ſtrict laws of Chriſtianity may make themſelves; ſo that at all times it requires a good degree of conſtancy and reſolution to perſevere in a holy courſe, and to bear up againſt the oppoſition of the world, and to withſtand it's temptations, to be *harmless and blameleſs in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation*; not to be infected with the eminent and frequent examples of vice, and carried down with the ſtream of a corrupt and degenerate age. So that tho' our difficulties be not always the ſame, and equal to thoſe which the primitive Chriſtians encountered, yet there is enough to exerciſe our beſt reſolution and care; tho' the main body of the enemies of Chriſtianity be broken, and *the race of Anak be deſtroyed out of the land*; *yet ſome of the inhabitants are ſtill left, to be thorns in our ſides, and pricks in our eyes*, that true religion may always have ſomething to exerciſe it's force and vigour upon. I have done with the firſt point, the difficulties of a Chriſtian courſe. I proceed to the

Second, The earneſt endeavour that is to be uſed on our part, for the conquering of theſe difficulties.

to the buſineſs of religion, if we will ſet upon it in good earneſt, theſe three things are required.

1ſt, A mighty reſolution to engage us in a holy and Chriſtian courſe.

2dly, Great diligence and induſtry to carry us on in it.

3dly, An invincible conſtancy to carry us through it, and make us perſevere in it to the end.

1ſt, A mighty reſolution to engage us in a holy and good courſe. For want of this, moſt men miſcarry and ſtumble at the very threſhold, and never get through the ſtrait gate, never maſter the difficulties of the firſt entrance. Many are well diſpoſed towards religion, and have fits of good inclination that way, (eſpecially in their young and tender years) but they want firmneſs of reſolution to conquer the difficulties of the firſt entrance upon a religious and virtuous life; like the young man that came to our SAVIOUR, well inclined to do ſome good thing, that *he might inherit eternal life*; but when it came to the point, he gave back, he was divided betwixt CHRIST and the world, and had not reſolution enough *to part with all for him.*

Many men (I doubt not) have frequent thoughts and deliberations about a better courſe of life, and are in a good mind to take up, and break off that lewd and vicious courſe they are in; but they cannot bring themſelves to a fixed purpoſe and reſolution: and yet without this nothing is to be done, *the double-minded man is unſtable in all his ways.* There muſt be no indifferency and irreſoluteneſs in our minds, if we will be Chriſtians; we muſt not ſtop at the gate, but reſolve to preſs in. We ſee that men can take up peremptory reſolutions in other matters, to be rich and great in the world, and why can be true and ſtedfaſt to theſe reſolutions; and why ſhould not men reſolve to be wiſe and happy, and hold to theſe reſolutions and make them good? GOD more ready to aſſiſt and ſtrengthen theſe kind of reſolutions than any other; and I am ſure no man hath ſo much reaſon to reſolve upon any thing, as to live a

holy and virtuous life; no other resolution can do a man that good, and bring him that comfort and happiness that this will.

2dly, The business of religion, as it requires a mighty resolution to engage us in a holy and good course, so likewise a great diligence to carry us on in it. When we are got through the strait gate, we must account to meet with many difficulties in our way; there are in the course of a Christian life many duties to be performed, which require great pains and care; many temptations to be resisted, which will keep us continually upon our guard? a great part of the way is up hill and not to be climbed without labour; and the scripture frequently calls upon us, *to work out our salvation with fear and trembling*; that is, with great care and industry; *to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure*; to follow holiness, διώκειν, to pursue it with great earnestness. Nothing in this world that is of value, is to be had on other terms; and we have low thoughts of heaven, if we think any pains too much to get thither.

3dly, The business of religion requires an invincible constancy to carry us through it, and to make us persevere in it to the end. Resolution may make a good entrance; but it requires great constancy and firmness of mind, to hold out in a good course. A good resolution may be taken up upon a present heat and may cool again; but nothing but a constant and steady temper of mind will make a man persevere; and yet without this, no man shall ever reach heaven. *He that continueth to the end shall be saved*; *but if any man draw back*, GOD's *soul will have no pleasure in him.* GOD puts this case by the prophet, and determines it, Ezek. xviii. 24. *When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, shall he live? all his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned*; *in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them he shall die*; nay so far will his righteousness from availing him, if he do not persevere in it, that will render his condition much worse, to have gone

ir towards heaven, and at last to turn his back upon
. So St Peter tells us, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. *For if after*
ey have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the
owledge of the LORD *and* SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST,
ey are again entangled therein and overcome; the latter
d is worse with them than the beginning; for it had
en better for them not to have known the way of righte-
sness, than after they have known it, to turn from the
ly commandment delivered unto them. I proceed to the
Third point, namely, that the difficulties of a holy
nd Christian life are not so great and insuperable, as to
e a just ground of discouragement to our endeavours.
ll that I have said concerning the difficulties of religion,
as with no design to damp, but rather to quicken our
iustry; for, upon the whole matter, when all things
e duly considered, it will appear that CHRIST's *yoke*
asy, and his burden light; that the commandments of
OD *are not grievous*; no, not this commandment of
iving to enter in at the strait gate; which I shall en-
avour to make manifest by taking these four things
o consideration.

1. The assistance which the gospel offers to us. GOD
ith there promised *to give his* HOLY SPIRIT *to them*
t ask him; and by the assistance of GOD's HOLY
IRIT, we may be able to conquer all those difficul-
s. Indeed if we were left to ourselves, to the impotency
d weakness of our own nature, we should never be able to
ge with these difficulties; every temptation would be
o hard for us; every little opposition would discourage
: but GOD *is with us, and there is nothing too hard*
him. If the principles of a holy life were only the
th of our own resolution, they would easily be borne
wn; but they are from GOD, of a heavenly birth and
ginal; and whatsoever is *born of* GOD, *overcometh*
e world. John i. 12, 13. *As many as received him,*
them gave he power (ἐξουσίαν, the privilege) *to be-*
me the sons of GOD, *even to them that believe on his*
me, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of
e flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD.

GOD

God conſiders the impotency of human nature, i this depraved and degenerate ſtate into which we a ſunk, and therefore he hath not left us to ourſelves but when he commands us to *work out our own ſalva tion*, he tells us for our encouragement, that *he himſe works in us both to will and to do*; he does not bid us t be ſtrong in our own ſtrength, for he knows we hav no ſtrength of our own, but to be *ſtrong in the* Lor *and in the power of his might*; and what may not eve a weak creature do, that is ſo powerfully aſſiſted? if w will but make uſe of this ſtrength, nothing can be to hard for us. All that God expects from us is, tha we ſhould comply with the motions of his Spirit and be as ſincere in the uſe of our endeavours, as he in the offers of his grace and aſſiſtance.

2. Let us conſider, that the greateſt difficulties are firſt; 'tis but making one manful onſet, and ſuſtainin the firſt brunt, and the difficulties will abate and gro leſs, and our ſtrength will every day increaſe and gro more. *The gate is ſtrait:* but when we have once g through it, *our feet will be ſet in an open place.* Aft ſome ſtruggling to get through, we ſhall every day fin o rſelves at more eaſe and liberty. It will be very ha at firſt, to maſter our vicious inclinations, to chan the habit of our minds, and the courſe of our lives, a to act contrary to what we have been long accuſtomed but this trouble laſts but for a little while; theſe pan of the new birth, tho' they be ſharp, yet they are n uſually of long continuance.

It does indeed require great reſolution and firmneſs mind, to encounter the firſt difficulties of religion: b if we can but ſtand it out for one brunt, our enem will give way, and the pleaſure of victory will tem us on. It is troubleſome to conflict with great difficu ties, and men are loth to be brought to it: but whe we are engaged, it is one of the greateſt pleaſures the world to prevail and conquer. Many men are lot to go to war; but, after a little ſucceſs, they are as lot

give over; that which was a terror to them at first, turns into a pleasure.

3. Consider that custom will make any course of life tolerable, and most things easy. Religion, and the practice of a holy life, is difficult at first; but after we are once habituated to it, the trouble will wear off by degrees, and that which was grievous will become easy; nay, by degrees, much more pleasant than ever the contrary practice was. We see the daily experience of this, in the most difficult and laborious employments of this world; a little pains tires a man at first, but when he is once seasoned and enured to labour, idleness becomes more tedious and troublesome to him than the hardest work. Custom will make any thing easy, tho' it be a little unnatural. Nothing is more unnatural than sin; 'tis not according to our original nature and frame, but it is the corruption and depravation of it, a second nature superinduced upon us by custom; whereas the practice of holiness and virtue is agreeable to our original and primitive state, and sin and vice are the perverting of nature contrary to our reason, and the design of our beings, and to all obligations of duty and interest: but by returning to GOD and our duty, we return to our primitive state; we act naturally, and according to the intention of our beings; and when the force of a contrary custom is taken off, and the bias clapt on the other side, *we shall run the ways of* GOD's *commandments with more delight* and satisfaction, than ever we found in the ways of sin.

For sin is a violence upon our natures, and that is always uneasy, yet it is made more tolerable by custom: but religion restores men to their natural state, and then we are at ease and rest. Religion is at first a yoke and burden: but unless we take this upon us, we shall never *find rest to our souls*.

4thly and lastly, Consider the reward that religion propounds, and this must needs sweeten and mitigate all the troubles and difficulties that are occasioned by it. This strait gate, through which we must enter; and this

this craggy way, which we are to climb up, leads t
life; and he is a lazy man indeed, that will not ſtriv
and ſtruggle for life All that a man can do, he wi
do for his life, for this miſerable life, which is ſo ſhor
and uncertain, and *born to trouble as the ſparks fly up
wards*; a life not worth the having, nor worth th
keeping with any great care and trouble, if it were n
in order to a better and happier life. But 'tis not th
life which our SAVIOUR means; that indeed were n
worth all this ſtriving for: 'tis eternal life; a ſtate o
perfect and endleſs happineſs; of *joys unſpeakable an
full of glory*. And who would not *ſtrive to enter in a
that gate*, which leads to ſo much felicity? can a ma
poſſibly take too much pains, be at too much troubl
for a few days, to be happy for ever?

So often as I conſider what incredible induſtry me
uſe for the things of this life, and to get a ſmall po
tion of this world, I am ready to conclude, that eith
men do not believe the rewards of another world, o
that they do not underſtand them; elſe they could n
think much to be at the ſame pains for heaven, th
they can chearfully beſtow for the obtaining of the
corruptible things. Can we be ſo unconſcionable, as
think GOD unreaſonable, when he offers heaven a
everlaſting happineſs to us, upon as eaſy terms, as an
thing in this world is ordinarily to be had? and a
not we very fooliſh and unwiſe, to put away eter
life from us, when we may have it upon terms ſo i
finitely below the true worth and value of it.

I have now done with the three things which I pr
pounded to ſpeak to from the firſt part of theſe wor
which are ſo many arguments to enforce the exhortati
here in the text; *to ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait ga*
and to give all diligence, by the courſe of a holy a
virtuous life, to get to heaven; and we may aſſu
ourſelves, that nothing leſs than this will bring
thither. So our SAVIOUR tells us, in the latter p
of the text; that *many ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſh
not be able*. I proceed now to the

Secon

Second part of the text; the reason or argument whereby this exhortation is enforced; *strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* Every seeking to enter in will not gain our admission into heaven; therefore there must be striving: for men may do many things in religion, and make several faint attempts to get to heaven, and yet at last fall short of it, for want of earnest contention and endeavour, which is necessary to the attaining of it. We must make religion our business, and set about it with all our might, and persevere and hold out in it, if ever we hope to be admitted to heaven; *for many shall seek to enter, that shall be shut out.*

Now what this seeking is, which is here opposed to *striving to enter in at the strait gate*, our SAVIOUR declares after the text, ver. 25. *When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and you begin to stand without, and knock at the door, saying, LORD, LORD, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know ye not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets; but he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.* St Matthew mentions some other pretences which they should make; upon which they should lay claim to heaven, Matth. vii. 21, 22, 23. *Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my FATHER which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.* After all their seeking to enter in, and notwithstanding all these pretences, they shall be shut out, and be for ever banished from the presence of GOD. This shall be their doom, which will be much the heavier, because of the disappointment

pointment of their confident expectation and hope. St Luke tells us, chap. xiii. 28, 29. *There ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth; when ye ſhall ſee Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of* GOD, *and ye yourſelves thruſt out. And they ſhall come from the eaſt, and from the weſt, and from the north, and from the ſouth, and ſhall ſit down in the kingdom of* GOD. To which St Matthew adds, ch. viii. ver. 12. *But the children of the kingdom ſhall be caſt out into utter darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.* And then our SAVIOUR concludes (Luke xiii. 30.) *Behold, there are laſt that ſhall be firſt, and firſt which ſhall be laſt.* From all which it appears with what confidence many men, upon theſe falſe grounds and pretences (which our SAVIOUR calls *ſeeking to enter in*) ſhall lay claim to heaven, and how ſtrangely they ſhall be diſappointed of their expectation and hope; when they ſhall find themſelves caſt out of heaven, who thought had out-done all others in religion, and were the only members of the true Church, and *the children and heirs of the kingdom*; and ſhall ſee others, whom they thought to be out of the pale of the true church and excluded from all terms of ſalvation, come from all quarters, and find free admiſſion into heaven; and themſelves find themſelves ſo groſsly and widely miſtaken, that thoſe very perſons, whom they thought to be laſt, and of all others fartheſt from ſalvation, ſhall be firſt; and they themſelves, whom they took for *the children of the kingdom*, and ſuch as ſhould be admitted into heaven in the firſt place, ſhall be rejected and caſt out.

So that by *ſeeking to enter*, we may underſtand those things which men may do in religion, upon which they ſhall pretend to lay claim to heaven, nay, and confidently hope to obtain it; and yet ſhall be ſhamefully diſappointed, and fall ſhort of it. Whatever men think and believe, and do in religion, what privileges ſoever men pretend, what ways and means ſoever men endevour to appeaſe the deity, and to recommend themſelves to the divine favour and acceptance, all this is but

ng to enter in, and is not that ſtriving which our SAVIOUR requires. *If men do not do the will of* GOD, *but are workers of iniquity*, it will all ſignify nothing to the obtaining of eternal happineſs.

Our SAVIOUR here inſtanceth in mens profeſſion of his religion, *calling him*, LORD, LORD; in their perſonal familiarity and converſation with him, by *eating and drinking in his preſence* and company; in their having heard him preach the doctrine of life and ſalvation, *thou haſt taught in our ſtreets*; in their having propheſied, and wrought great miracles in his name and by his power, *have we not propheſied in thy name? and in thy name caſt out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* theſe were great and glorious things which they boaſted of; and yet nothing of all this will do, if men *do not the will of* GOD; notwithſtanding all this, he will ſay unto them, *I know ye not whence ye are, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.*

And by a plain parity of reaſon, whatever elſe men do in religion, what attempts ſoever men may make to get to heaven, upon what privileges or pretences ſoever they may lay claim to eternal life, they will certainly fall ſhort of it, if they *do not the will of* GOD, but *are workers of iniquity*. My buſineſs therefore at this time ſhall be, to diſcover the ſeveral falſe claims and pretences which men may make to heaven, and yet ſhall never enter into it. And to this purpoſe I ſhall inſtance in ſeveral particulars, by one or more of which men commonly delude themſelves, and are apt to entertain vain and ill-grounded hopes of eternal ſalvation.

1ſt, Some truſt to the external profeſſion of the true religion.

2dly, Others have attained to a good degree of knowledge in religion, and they rely much upon that.

3dly, There are others that find themſelves much affected with the word of GOD, and the doctrines contained in it.

4thly, Others are very ſtrict and devout in the external worſhip of GOD,

5thly, Others confide much in their being member of the only true Church, in which alone salvation is to be had, and in the manifold privileges and advantag which therein they have above others of getting heaven.

6thly, Others think their great zeal for GOD a his true religion, will certainly save them.

7thly, Others go a great way in the real practice religion.

8thly, Others rely much upon the sincerity of th repentance and conversion, whereby they are put i a state of grace, and become the children of GOD, a heirs of everlasting life; and being once truly so, th can never fall from that state, so as finally to miscarry

Lastly, Others venture all upon a death-bed repe tance, and their importunity with GOD to receive th to mercy at the last.

I shall briefly go over these particulars, which are several ways whereby men *seek to enter* into heaven, hope to get thither at last; and shall shew the insu ciency of them; and that there is something beyond this necessary to be done for the attainment of everlast salvation.

1st, Some trust to the mere external profession of true religion, and think it enough to call CHRIST, LO LORD, to be baptized in his name, and thereby to admitted members of the Christian church. What apostle says of the profession of the Jewish religion, the outward badge of it, *circumcision*, may be applie the profession of Christianity made in baptism, Rom 17, 25, 28, 29. *Behold thou art called a Jew, restest in the law, and makest thy boast of* GOD. *Circ cision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made un cumcision: for he is not a Jew that is one outwardly, ne is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcis that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the l* The case is the same of those who make only an

ard profession of Christianity. *Baptism verily profiteth, if we perform the condition of that covenant which we entered into by baptism*; but if we do not, our baptism is no baptism: for *he is not a Christian, which is one outwardly, nor is that baptism, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian, which is one inwardly, and baptism is of the heart, in the spirit, and not in water only.* So St Peter tells us, 1 Pet. iii. 21. that baptism is not only the washing of the body with water, and *the putting away of the filth of the flesh*; *but the answer of a good conscience towards* GOD.

The promise of eternal life and happiness is not made to the external profession of religion without the sincere and real practice of it. *Why call ye me* LORD, LORD, (says our SAVIOUR) *and do not the things which I say?* The Scripture hath no where said, *he that is baptized shall be saved*; but *he that believeth and is baptized, he that repenteth and is baptized, shall be saved.* This deserves to be seriously considered by a great many Christians, who have nothing to shew for their Christianity, but their names; whose best title to heaven is their baptism, an engagement entered into by others in their name, but never confirmed and made good by an act of their own; a thing which was done before they remember, and which hath no other effect upon their hearts and lives, than if it were quite forgotten.

Lastly, There are are others who have attained to a good degree of knowledge in religion, and they hope that will save them. But if our knowledge in religion, though never so clear and great, do not descend into our hearts and lives, and govern our actions, all our hopes of heaven are built upon a false and sandy foundation. For our SAVIOUR tells us, Matth. vii. 26. *Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.* And John xiii. 17. *If ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them.*

There is not a greater cheat in religion, nothing wherein men do more grossly impose upon themselves,

than in this matter, as if the knowledge of religion without the practice of it, would bring men to heaven. How diligent are many in reading and hearing the word of GOD, who yet take no care to practise it in their lives? like those in the prophet, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. of whom GOD complains, *They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear my words; but they will not do them.* None do so foolishly, and yet so deservedly miss of happiness, as those who are very careful to learn the way to heaven, and, when they have done, will take no pains at all to get thither.

3dly, There are others who find themselves much affected with the word of GOD, and the preaching of it; and this they take for a very good sign, that it has it's due effect upon them. And this happens very frequently, that the word of GOD makes considerable impressions upon men for the present, and they are greatly affected with it, and troubled for their sins, and afraid of the judgments of GOD, and the terrible vengeance of another world; and upon this they take some resolutions of a better course, which after a little while vanish and come to nothing. This was the temper of the people of Israel, they delighted to hear the prophet speak to them in the name of GOD, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. *And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument, for they hear thy words, but they do them not.* Mark vi. 20. it is said that Herod had a great reverence for John the baptist, *that he observed him, and heard him gladly*; but yet for all that, he continued the same cruel and bad man that he was before. And in the parable of the sower, Matth. xiii. 20. there are one sort of hearers mentioned, who, *when they heard the word, received it with joy; but having no root in themselves, they endured but for a while, and when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, presently they are offended.* There are many men who have sudden motions in religion, and are mightily affected for the present

resent; but it must be a rooted and fixed principle, hat will endure and hold out against great difficulties nd opposition. Acts xxiv. 25. it is said that when t Paul *reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and udgment to come, Felix trembled:* and nothing is more requent, than for men to be mightily startled at the eaching of the word, when their judgments are con-inced and borne down, and their consciences touched o the quick; a lively representation of the evil of sin, nd the infinite danger of a sinful course, may stir up he passions of grief and fear, and dart such stings into he consciences of men, as may make them extremely estless and unquiet, and work some good thoughts and dinations in them towards a better course; and yet ke metals, when the heat is over, they may be the arder for having been melted down.

4thly, Others shew great strictness and devotion in he worship of God, and this they hope will be ac-pted, and cannot fail to bring them to heaven: and t some of the worst of men have been very eminent this. The Pharisees were the most exact people in e world in matter of external ceremony and devotion; d yet for all this, our Saviour plainly tells them, t *they were farther from the kingdom of* God, than se who seemed to be fartheſt, *than publicans and lots*; and that because they were so very bad, under great a pretence of devotion, therefore they should eive the greater damnation.

Not but that external devotion is a necessary expres-n of religion, and highly acceptable to God, when proceeds from a pious and devout mind, and when n are really such in their hearts and lives, as their ternal devotion represents them to be: but when the tward garb of religion is only made a cloke for sin wickedness, when there is nothing within to answer the shew that we see without, nothing is more ous and abominable to God. These are mere engines puppets in religion, all the motions we see without ceed from an artificial contrivance, and not from any

inward principle of life; and as no creature is mor ridiculous than an ape, becauſe the beaſt makes ſom pretence to human ſhape; ſo nothing is more fulſom than this hypocritical devotion, becauſe it looks lik religion, but is the fartheſt from it of any thing in th world.

5thly, Others conſide very much in their being mem bers of the only true Church, in which alone ſalvatio is to be had, and in the manifold privileges and adva tages which they have thereby above others of gettin to heaven. Thus the Jews confined ſalvation to them ſelves, and looked upon all the reſt of the world a excluded from it. And not only ſo, but they believe that by one means or other every Iſraelite ſhould b ſaved. So that they were the Jewiſh catholick church out of which there was no hope of ſalvation for any.

The ſame pretence is made by ſome Chriſtians at th day, who engroſs ſalvation to themſelves, and will allo none to go to heaven out of the communion of the church; and have ſo ordered the matter, that hard any that are in it can miſcarry. They are members an infallible church, which cannot poſſibly err in matte of faith, *they have not only eat and drunk in* CHRIST *preſence*, but have eat and drunk his very corporal pr ſence, the natural ſubſtance of his fleſh and blood; th have not only our bleſſed SAVIOUR, but innumerab other interceſſors in heaven; they have not only th own merits to plead for them, but in caſe they be d fective, they may have the merits of others aſſign and made over to them, out of the infinite ſtock a treaſure of the church, upon which they may challen eternal life, as of right and due belonging to them and by a due courſe of confeſſion and abſolution, m quit ſcores with GOD for all their ſins from time time. Or if they have neglected all this, they m after the moſt flagitious courſe of life, upon attriti (that is, upon ſome trouble for ſin, out of fear of h and damnation) joined with confeſſion and abſolutio get to heaven at laſt; provided the prieſt mean honeſt

nd do not, for want of intention, deprive them of the
ving benefit and effect of this sacrament.

But is it possible men can be deluded at this rate! as
think that confidence of their own good condition,
nd want of charity to others, will carry them to hea-
n? that any church hath the privilege to save impe-
tent sinners? and they are really impenitent, who do
t exercise such a repentance, as the gospel plainly
quires; and if men die in this state, whatever church
ey are of, the great judge of the world hath told us,
at he *will not know them*, but will bid them *to depart
om him, because they have been workers of iniquity*.

6thly, Others think that their zeal for GOD and his
ne religion will certainly save them. But zeal, if it
not *according to knowledge*, if it be mistaken in it's
ject, or be irregular and excessive in the degree, is so
from being a virtue, that it may be a great sin and
ult; and tho' it be for the truth, yet if it be destitute
charity, and separated from the virtues of a good
e, it will not avail us. So St Paul tells us, that *tho'
man shall give his body to be burnt; yet if he have not
arity, it is nothing*.

7thly, Others go a great way in the real practice of
gion, and this sure will do the business. And it is
true, and certain in experience, that religion may
ve a considerable awe and influence upon mens hearts
lives, and yet they may fall short of happiness.
en may in many considerable instances perform their
y to GOD and man; and yet the retaining of one
t, the practice of any one known sin, may hinder
em from *entering in at the strait gate*. Herod did not
ly *hear John gladly*, but *did many things* in obedience
his doctrine; and yet he was a very bad man. The
arisee thanked GOD (and it may be truly) *that he
as not like other men, an extortioner, or unjust, or an
dulterer*; and yet the penitent publican was *justified
fore him*. The young man who came to our SAVIOUR
know what he should do to enter into life, and of
om our SAVIOUR testifies, that he was *not far from*

the

the kingdom of GOD, and that he *wanted but one thing* yet for want of that he miſcarried. And St James aſſures us, that *if a man keep the whole law, and yet fail in one point, he is guilty of all.* If we be workers of iniquity in any one kind CHRIST will diſown us and bid us *depart from him.*

5thly, Others rely upon the ſincerity of their repentance and converſion, whereby they are put into a ſtate of grace, from whence they can never finally fall. They did once very heartily repent of their wicked lives and did change their courſe, and were really reformed and continued a great while in that good courſe. And all this may be certainly true, but it is as certain that they are relapſed into their former evil courſe: and ſo, the prophet hath told us their doom, that *if the righteous man forſake his righteouſneſs, his righteouſneſs ſhall not be remembered; but in the ſin that he hath ſinned, in that ſhall he die.* So that *a righteous man may turn from his righteouſneſs, and commit iniquity, and die in it.* For the prophet doth not here (as ſome vainly pretend) put a caſe, which is impoſſible in fact ſhould happen, unleſs they will ſay, that the other caſe which he puts together with it, of *the wicked man's turning away from his wickedneſs, and doing that which is lawful and right,* is likewiſe impoſſible, which GOD forbid. And that men may fall from a ſtate of grace, is no matter of diſcouragement to good men; but a good caution againſt ſecurity, and an argument to great care and watchfulneſs, according to that of the apoſtle *let him that ſtandeth take heed leſt he fall*; which admonition were ſurely to little purpoſe, if it were impoſſible for them that ſtand to fall.

Laſtly, Others venture all upon a death-bed repentance, and their importunity with GOD to receive them to mercy at laſt. This indeed is only *to ſeek,* and not *to ſtrive to enter in*; and theſe perhaps are they whom our SAVIOUR repreſents as *ſtanding without, and knocking at the door, ſaying* LORD, LORD, open unto us; or, as St Matthew expreſſeth it, *many ſhall ſay to*

hat day, LORD, LORD, which is most probably meant
f the day of judgment, when their case is brought to
he last extremity; and next to that is the day of
eath, when m n are entering into a state of endless hap-
ness or misery. And no wonder, if the sinner would
en be glad, when he can no longer continue in this
orld, to be admitted into happiness in the next: but
e door is then shut to most sinners, and it is a miracle
f GOD's grace and mercy, if any repentance that men
n then exercise, (which at the best must needs be
ry confused and imperfect) will then be accepted; if
y importunity, which men can then use, will be
ilable. For with what face can we expect, that
er all the evil actions of a long life, GOD should
mollified towards us by a few good words, and accept
a forced and constrained repentance for all our wilful
deliberate crimes, and that he should forgive us all
sins upon a little importunity, when we can sin no
ger, and will repent no sooner.

Let us then, by all that hath been said, be effectually
suaded to mind the business of religion in good earnest,
with all our might, especially the practice of it in
exercise of all the graces and virtues of a good life.
us heartily repent of all the sins of our past life,
resolve upon a better course for the future; and
s not delay and put off this necessary work to the
unfit and improper time of old age, and sickness,
death; but let us set about it presently, and enter
a good course, and make all the speed and progress
we can.

And let us remember, that whatever we do in religion
not bring us to heaven, if we do not *do the will*
FATHER *which is in heaven*; if we do not give
ourselves to a constant and universal obedience to
laws. This is *to strive to enter in at the strait gate*
tho' we *strive to enter in* a thousand other ways,
shall not be able; and after all our confidence and
eit of ourselves, and our own righteousness, and
ity of our salvation from the privileges of any
church,

church, it will be a ſtrange damp and diſappointment to us, to ſee the ſincere Chriſtians, who have done the will of GOD, and lived in obedience to his laws, to come from all quarters, and churches in the world, and *ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of* GOD, when we who thought ourſelves *the children of the kingdom, ſhall be caſt out*, becauſe we have been *workers of iniquity*. I will conclude all with thoſe plain words of the apoſtle, Rom. ii. 7, 8, 9. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory and honour, and immortality; eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, upon every ſoul of man that doth evil; in the day when* GOD *ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by* JESUS CHRIST *according to the goſpel.*

SERMON

SERMON CXXVI.

The parable of the rich man, and Lazarus.

The first sermon on this text.

LUKE xvi. 19, 20.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores.

I Intend by GOD's assistance to go over this parable, than which I think there is none in the whole gospel, which is more apt to affect men, or which more artificially contrived, and in the circumstances thereof a greater decorum is observed.

It is a great question among interpreters, whether the narration concerning the rich man and Lazarus be a parable, or a history, or a mixture of both. That it is not a history, the resemblance between it and others of our SAVIOUR's parables, will easily convice any man that is not contentious; besides that, in some ancient copies, 'tis ushered in with this preface, *and he spake a parable to his disciples: a certain rich man*, &c.

But yet as some of the ancients have not improbably conjectured, it seems to be such a kind of parable, as had something of a real foundation; as namely, that there was such a poor man as Lazarus is here described, and of that name among the Jews: for in a meer parable 'tis altogether unusual to name persons, nor is this done in any other of our SAVIOUR's parables.

But

But whether this be so or not, is not worth the d puting, because it alters not the case as to our S VIOUR's purpose, and the instructions which we m learn from it.

In the handling of this parable, I shall explain it go along, and draw two sorts of instructions or ob vations from it.

The first sort of observations shall be from the cumstances which serve for the decorum of the para and these I will not warrant to be all intended by SAVIOUR; but only to be true in themselves, and ful, and to have a probable rise from some circumsta of the parable; and therefore I shall speak but briefly to them.

The second sort of observations shall be such grounded upon the main scope and intent of the para and these I shall insist more largely upon, I begin,

First, With those observations and instructions I shall gather up from the circumstances which serve the decorum of the parable; and I shall take them order as they lie in the parable.

Ver. 19. *There was a certain rich man, which clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptu every day.* Some think that our SAVIOUR in thi scription reflected upon Herod, because he describes rich man to be *clothed in purple*. But this conjectu without reason; for besides that it was not our S VIOUR's custom in his preaching, to give secret girds the magistrate; 'tis certain that it was long after SAVIOUR's time, that purple was appropriated to kin It was then, and a great while after, the wear of ri and powerful men, and of the favourites and great m of the court, who are frequently in ancient histor called the *purpurati*, those that wore purple.

That which I observe from hence, is, that the ri man is not here censured for enjoying what he had, wearing rich apparel, and keeping a great table. Th of itself, if it be according to a man's estate and qualit and without intemperance, is so far from being a faul th

it is a commendable virtue. But here was his fault, he made all to ſerve his own ſenſuality and luxury, out any conſideration of the wants and neceſſities thers: whereas one of the great uſes of the plen- tables of rich men, is from the ſuperfluity of to feed the poor and the hungry.

Ver. 20. *And there was a certain beggar named* *arus*, as if our SAVIOUR had ſaid, for inſtance, Lazarus whom ye all knew. And here I can- but take notice of the decorum which our SA- UR uſes. He would not name any rich man, be- e that was invidious, and apt to provoke. He avours to make all men ſenſible of their duty; he would provoke none of them by any peeviſh tion; for nothing is more improper than to pro- e thoſe whom we intend to perſuade. While a 's reaſon is calm and undiſturbed, it is capable of h fairly propounded; but if we once ſtir up men's ions, it is like muddying of the waters, they can rn nothing clearly afterwards. But to proceed in parable.

There was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which laid at the rich man's gate full of ſores, and was us to be fed with the crumbs which fell from table, moreover the dogs came and licked his ſores. are three great aggravations of the rich man's aritableneſs.

ſt, That here was an object preſented itſelf to him.

dly, Such an object as would move any one's a man reduced to extreme miſery and neceſſity.

dly, A little relief would have contented him.

ſt, Here was an object preſented itſelf to him, La- s laid at a rich man's gate; ſo that as often as he t out of his own houſe and came in, he could not take notice of him. Good men that are charitably oſed, will enquire out objects for their charity, and always ſtay till they thruſt themſelves upon them: he is a very bad man, who, when an object of great and charity is preſented, is ſo far from relenting

towards him, that he ſtops his ear to his cry, and turns away his face from him. He is an uncharitable man who being rich, and hearing of the miſeries of others does not take them into conſideration: but what we ſee with our eyes is much more apt to affect us. So that this was an argument of a very cruel diſpoſition in the rich man, that having ſo many occaſions of ſeeing Lazarus, he ſhould never be moved to commiſerate him.

2dly, Here was ſuch an object preſented to him as would move any one's pity, a man reduced to extreme miſery and neceſſity. Here was no common object of charity, a man, not only in extreme want but in great pain and anguiſh, and ſo helpleſs, that he was unable to keep off the dogs from being troubleſome to him. And yet this did not move him.

3dly, A very little relief would have contented the poor man, and have been a great kindneſs to him, that which the rich man might have ſpared without the leaſt prejudice to himſelf. He would have been glad to have been *fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table*; and yet the parable intimates that the rich man was ſo hard hearted, as not to afford him theſe.

Ver. 22. *And it came to paſs that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's boſom.* Here was a great and ſudden change! he, who when he was alive was neglected by men, and contumeliouſly expoſed like a dead carcaſe to the dogs; when he dies, is attended on by the angels, and by them ſafely conveyed into a ſtate of unſpeakable happineſs. He who lay at the rich man's gate, and could find no entrance there, is admitted into heaven. *The beggar died, and was carried into Abraham's boſom.*

'Tis very obſervable, that our SAVIOUR in this parable repreſents men as paſſing immediately out of this life into a ſtate of happineſs or torment. And

in no other place of ſcripture, ſo neither in this, ere it had been ſo proper, does our SAVIOUR the leaſt intimation of the ſtate of purgatory, ch the Church of Rome hath deviſed, and makes much profit and advantage of, which, becauſe it is ifible and apparent, we may without uncharitable- ſuppoſe to be the reaſon why they keep ſuch a ſtir ut it.

And was carried by the angels into Abraham's boſom. was an ancient tradition among the Jews, that angels did attend good men at their death, carry their ſouls into paradiſe, which is here ed *Abraham's boſom.* And this was a proper place Lazarus, who had been neglected by the rich man; be conveyed into *Abraham's boſom,* who was of a e contrary temper. and loved to entertain and re- ſtrangers.

And paradiſe is fitly called *Abraham's boſom,* be- e the Jews had ſo great a veneration for Abra- , and that deſervedly for his eminent faith and ience, that they gave him the firſt place among bleſſed. Hence is the expreſſion, Matth. viii. of *ſitting down with Abraham, and Iſaac, Jacob, in the kingdom of* GOD. Now this ex- ion of *being in Abraham's boſom,* is an alluſion to uſtom of feaſts among the Jews, where the moſt med and beloved gueſt ſat next him that was chief e feaſt, and leaned on his boſom. Hence St John lled the diſciple whom JESUS loved, becauſe when ſat at meat, he leaned on his boſom. John xiii. 23. ce likewiſe is the expreſſion of our SAVIOUR's g *in the boſom of his* FATHER, to ſignify his dear- to him, John i. 18. *No man hath ſeen* GOD *at time; the only begotten* SON *which is in the boſom of* FATHER, *he hath declared him.*

I proceed. *The rich man alſo died, and was ed. The rich man alſo died:* this is very ele- and emphatical, inſinuating to us, what the pture ſo often takes notice of, that riches, for all

men's confidence in them, will not deliver fr
death. This rich man indeed was out of danger
being ſtarved and famiſhed, as poor Lazarus w
But death had other ways to come at him. It
probable enough, that he might be ſurfeited by
ring ſumptuouſly every day. The rich man
died.

And was buried. And here again we may
ſerve the ſtrict decorum which our SAVIOUR
in this parable. It is not ſaid of Lazarus, that
was buried, but only that *he died*; it is probable t
he was flung out of the way into ſome pit or oth
but of the rich man it is ſaid, *he was buried.* A
this is all the advantage which a rich man hath b
great eſtate after he is dead, to have a pompous
ſolemn funeral; which yet ſignifies nothing to him
ter death, becauſe he is inſenſible of it.

Ver. 23. *And in hell he lift up his eyes be*
in torments, and ſeeth Abraham afar off, and L
zarus in his boſom. As corporal acts are attribu
to GOD in Scripture, ſo likewiſe to ſepara
ſouls.

In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torme
intimating to us, that this ſenſual and volupt
man had ſtupidly paſſed away his life without any
rious thoughts and conſideration: but now at
he was awakened, when it was too late, and be
to conſider. *In hell he lift up his eyes, being*
torments.

O the ſtupidity of ſinners! who run on blindly
their courſe, and never open their eyes till they
fallen into the pit; who cannot be brought to conſi
'till conſideration will do them no good; 'till it ſe
to no other purpoſe, but to enrage their conſcienc
and to multiply the ſtings of them.

Thus it was with this rich man, *he lift up*
eyes being in torments, and ſeeth Abraham afar
and Lazarus in his boſom. Our SAVIOUR repreſe
him as ſeeing that which would then moſt proba
co

to his mind. Feeling his own misery, he be-
o consider the happy condition of the poor man
n he had so cruelly neglected. And indeed one
part of the torment of hell, consists in those re-
ons which men shall make upon the happiness
h they have wilfully lost and neglected, and the
whereby they have plunged themselves into that
able state.

er. 24. *And he cried, and said, father Abra-
, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that
may dip the tip of his finger in water, and
my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*
how the scene is changed; now he is fain
eg relief of the beggar who had sued to him in

*nd Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger
ater, and cool my tongue.* Here is another very
nt circumstance; the rich man is represented as not
ng the face to beg any great relief from Lazarus,
uds whom he had been so hard-hearted. *To dip
tip of his finger in water, to cool his tongue,* had
a very great favour from Lazarus, to whom the
man had denied even the *crumbs which fell from his*

r I am tormented in this flame. The Scripture
to make use of sensible representations, to
forth to us the happiness and misery of the
life; partly by way of condescension to our
rstandings, and partly to work more power-
upon our affections. For whilst we are in the
, and immersed in sense, we are most apt to be
ed by such descriptions of things as are sensi-
; and therefore the torments of wicked men in
, are usually in Scripture described to us, by one
the quickest and sharpest pains that human na-
is ordinarily acquainted withal, namely, by the
of burning; fire being the most active thing in
re, and therefore capable of causing the sharpest

But we cannot from these and the like expressions of Scripture, certainly determine that this is the true and proper pain of hell: all that we can infer from these descriptions is this, that the sufferings of wicked men in the other world, shall be very terrible, and exceeding great, and probably greater, than can possibly be described to us, by any thing that we are now acquainted withal; for who knows the power of GOD's anger, and the utmost of what omnipotent justice can do to sinners? for as the glory of heaven, and the joys of GOD's presence are now inconceivable; so likewise are the torments of hell, and the miseries of the damned; *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,* those dreadful things *which* GOD *prepares for them that hate him.* Who can imagine the utmost significancy of those phrases which the Scripture uses to set forth this to us, of GOD's being *a consuming fire,* of being *tormented in flames,* of GOD's *wrath and jealousy smoking* against sinners, and all the curses that are written in his book, falling upon them? who can conceive the horror of those expressions, *the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched,* of GOD's *pouring out the vials of his wrath,* of being *delivered over to the tormentor,* of being *thrust into utter darkness,* of being *cast into the lake of fire and brimstone?* These forms of speech seem to be borrowed from those things which among men are most dreadful and affrighting; and to be calculated and accommodated to our capacities; and not so much intended to express to us the proper and real torments of hell, as to convey to us in a more sensible and affecting manner the sense of what the Scripture says in general, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living* GOD.

Ver. 25. *But Abraham said, son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. Abraham said, son, remember*

very observable how our SAVIOUR chooses to
sent to us the discourse between Abraham and the
man; though there was the greatest difference
een them imaginable, the one was in heaven,
the other in hell, yet they treated one another
lly. Abraham is brought in giving the common
s of civility to this wretched wicked man, and
ng him son, *son, remember.* It was indeed a very
re thing which he said to him; he put him in
d of his former prosperity, and of his fault in
unmerciful usage of Lazarus; *remember, son,*
thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things,
Lazarus, &c. But yet whilst he speaks such
p things to him, he bates bad language. A man
say very severe things, where a just occasion re-
es it; but he must use no reviling; *rem ipsam dic,*
malè loqui, "say the thing, but use no bad
anguage." And this, as one says, is the true
of chiding, the proper stile wherein we must use to
ove. If we do it with malice, and anger, and con-
pt, it is misbecoming, even though we despair of
good: but if we hope for any good effect, we
like to miss of it this way; for as the apostle says
llently, *the wrath of man worketh not the righteous-*
of GOD.

me think that Abraham gives the rich man the
of son ironically, and by way of jeer: but with-
all reason. For surely there is not so much
nature in heaven, as to scoff at those who are
misery. Besides that, we find our SAVIOUR
rving this decorum of good language in other
his parables: as particularly, in that of the king
invited guests to the marrige of his son, Matth.
11. When the king saw there the man, that
e without his wedding garment, though he passed
ry severe sentence upon him, yet he gives him the
mon terms of civility, *friend, how camest thou*
r,

This

This should teach us Christians how we ought to demean ourselves towards those who are at the greatest distance from us, and how we ought to behave ourselves towards one another in the greatest differences of religion. None sure can be at greater distance, than Abraham in paradise, and the rich man in hell; and yet our SAVIOUR would not represent them as at terms of defiance with one another. One might have expected that Abraham should have reviled this poor wretch, and disdained to have spoken to him: but this is not the temper of heaven, nor ought it to be of good men upon earth, even towards the worst of men.

How does this condemn our rudeness and impatience with one another in our religious differences? we think no terms bad enough to use towards one another: and yet one of the most famous disputes that we find mentioned in Scripture, and that between the most opposite parties that can be imagined, was managed after another fashion; I mean that recorded by St Jude between Michael the archangel, and the devil, ver. 9. *Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring a railing accusation*, he durst not allow himself this, no not in the heat of dispute, when persons are most apt to fly out into passion, because it was indecent, and would have been displeasing to God: this I believe is the true reason why it is said, *he durst not bring a railing accusation*. And yet I may add another, which is not improper for our consideration: I am sure it hath a good moral; the devil would have been too hard for him at railing, he was better skilled at that weapon, and more expert at that kind of dispute.

Which consideration may be a good argument to us against reviling any man. If we revile the good we are unjust, because they deserve it not; if we revile the bad, we are unwise, because we shall get nothing by

t. I could almoſt envy the character which was n of one of the Romans: *neſcivit quid eſſet maledicere*, e knew not what it was to give bad language."

I proceed. *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time vedſt thy good things. Thy good things*, thoſe ch thou didſt value and eſteem ſo highly, and didſt e thy chief happineſs in, as if there had been no r good to be ſought after. *Thy good things*, and ed ſo he uſed them, as if he had been the ſole lord proprietor of them, and they had not been com-ted to him, as a ſteward, to be diſpenſed for his ſter's uſe, for the clothing of the naked, and the ding of the hungry, and the relieving of thoſe in reſs.

Ver. 27, 28. *Then he ſaid, I pray thee therefore, ther, that thou wouldſt ſend him to my father's houſe: I have five brethren; that he may teſtify unto them, they alſo come into this place of torment.* Here the h man, tho' in hell, is repreſented as retaining ſome derneſs for his relations, as ſolicitous, leſt they uld be involved in the ſame miſery with himſelf. e laſt piece of that which commonly remains in , is natural affection, which is not ſo much a vir-, as a natural principle, and is common to many e beaſts. When a man puts off this, we may give up for loſt to all manner of goodneſs. To be *thout natural affection*, is the worſt character can be n of a man. Our SAVIOUR repreſents this rich n in hell as not ſo totally degenerate, as to be quite ſtitute of this.

I think ſome attribute this motion of the rich man ncerning his brethren to another cauſe; as if he had ired it, not out of kindneſs to them, but out of gard to himſelf, as being afraid, that if his brethren, o probably were corrupted by his example, had pe-hed by that means, it would have been an aggrava-n of his torments. But this conjecture is too ſub-, and without any good ground; for every man

carries

carries his burden of guilt with him out of this world, and it is not increaſed by any conſequence of our actions here. For the crime of a bad example is the ſame whether men follow it or not, becauſe he that gives bad example to others, does what in him lies to draw them into ſin; and if they do not follow it, that is no mitigation of his fault.

I have but one obſervation more, and that is from the mention of his brethren as his neareſt relations, which is a great aggravation of the rich man's uncharitableneſs, becauſe he is repreſented as having no children to take care for, and yet he would not conſider the poor.

And thus I have, as briefly as I could, endeavoured to explain this parable, and have made ſuch obſervations from the circumſtances of it, as may be uſeful for our inſtruction. But as I premiſed at firſt; I will not warrant all theſe obſervations to be certainly intended by our SAVIOUR; I know very well that every circumſtance of a parable is not to be preſſed too far, the moral accommodation does chiefly belong to the main ſcope of it, and many circumſtances are only brought in to fill up the parable, and to make up a handſomer way for that which is moſt material, and principally intended: but ſo long as the obſervations are true and uſeful, and have a fair colour and occaſion from the circumſtances, it is well enough; to be ſure there is no harm done. I proceed to the ſecond ſort of obſervations, namely, ſuch as are drawn from the main ſcope and intent of the parable, which I promiſed to ſpeak more largely to; and they are ſix, which I ſhall handle in order.

Firſt, I obſerve that uncharitableneſs and unmercifulneſs to the poor, is a great and damning ſin. We find no other fault imputed to the rich man but this, that he took no care out of his ſuperfluity and abundance to relieve this poor man that lay at his gate. He is not charged for want of juſtice, but of charity;

no

for having got a great eſtate by fraud or oppreſſion, that in the midſt of this abundance he had no con-ation and pity for thoſe that were in want.

I ſhall endeavour to make out this obſervation by parts of it.

ſt, That unmercifulneſs and uncharitableneſs to poor is a great ſin.

dly, Such a ſin, as alone and without any other , is ſufficient to ruin a man for ever. I ſhall ſpeak theſe ſeverally.

ſt, That unmercifulneſs and uncharitableneſs to poor is a very great ſin. It contains in it's very ure two black crimes, inhumanity and impiety.

. Inhumanity; it is an argument of a cruel and ge diſpoſition, not to pity thoſe that are in want miſery. And he doth not truly pity the miſeries others, that doth not relieve them when he hath ty and opportunity in his hands. Tenderneſs and paſſion for the ſufferings of others is a virtue ſo er to our nature, that it is therefore called huma-, as if it were eſſential to human nature, and as if out this, we did not deſerve the name of men. ee men like ourſelves, *bone of our bone, and fleſh r fleſh*, labour under want and neceſſity, and yet to be moved to commiſerate them, this is a ſign we have put off our own nature, otherwiſe we ld pity the ſufferings of it in others. For when-we behold a man like ourſelves groaning under t, and preſſed with neceſſity, and do not relent ards him, and are not ready to relieve him, we hard-hearted to our own nature, and do in ſome e what the apoſtle ſays *no man ever did* (that is, retaining the temper and affections of a man) *his own fleſh*.

This the Scripture ſpeaks of as a moſt barbarous of inhumanity, and calls it murder, 1 John iii. 15. *ſo hateth his brother is a murderer*; and not to ve our brother in want, is to hate him; for this

is

is the inſtance which the apoſtle gives at the 17 verſe, *whoſo hath this world's goods, and ſeeth brother in want, and ſhutteth up his bowels of paſſion from him*; whoſo doth not conſider the po is a manſlayer and a murderer, he is cruel to his nature, nay, were he ſufficiently ſenſible of the c dition of human nature, he is cruel to himſelf.

Seeſt thou a poor man in great miſery and w there is nothing that hath befallen him, but wha common to man, what might have been thy lot portion as well as his, and what may happen to t or thine another time. Make it therefore thine o caſe; (for ſo the providence of GOD may make it time or other, and thou provokeſt him to make it ſpeedily by thy unmerciful diſpoſition toward the poo I ſay, make it thine own caſe, if thou wert in poor man's condition, and he in thine, conſult th own bowels, and tell me how thou wouldſt wiſh h to be affected toward thee. Wouldſt thou be will that he ſhould ſlight and repulſe thee, and ſhut his bowels of compaſſion from thee? if not, then not thou ſo deal with him, conſider that it may thine own caſe, therefore do not thou give the w any bad example in this kind, do not teach men t unmerciful, leſt they learn of thee, and thou the ill effects of it, when it comes to be thine o condition. This is the firſt aggravation of this ſi the inhumanity of it. But,

2. Beſides the inhumanity of this ſin, it is likew a great impiety toward GOD. Unmercifulneſs to t poor hath this fourfold impiety in it; it is a contem of GOD; an uſurpation upon his right; a ſlighti of his providence; and a plain demonſtration that do not love GOD, and that all our pretences to religi are hypocritical and inſincere.

1. It is a contempt of GOD, and a reproaching him; ſo Solomon tells us, Prov. xiv. 31. *He th oppreſſeth the poor*, (not only he that dealeth unju wit

a poor man, but he that is uncharitable towards as appears by the oppoſition, *but he that honour-him hath mercy on the poor*; here oppreſſion of poor is oppoſed to want of charity towards him;) *that oppreſſeth the poor reproacheth his maker.* How hat? he deſpiſeth GOD who made him after his image and likeneſs: for the poor man bears the ge of GOD as well as the rich, ſo that thou canſt oppreſs or neglect him, without ſome reflection GOD, whoſe image he bears.

2. The uncharitable man is an uſurper upon GOD's *t, the earth is the* LORD's, *and the fulneſs thereof, d he hath given it to the children of men,* not ab-tely to diſpoſe of as they pleaſe, but in truſt, and certain reſervations, ſo as to be accountable to for the diſpoſal of it. In reſpect of other men, are indeed true proprietors of our eſtates: but in ect of GOD, we are but ſtewards; and he will us to an account how we have laid them out. So ch as we need is ours; but beyond what will ſup-us, and be a convenient proviſion for our family, the rank wherein GOD hath placed us, all that is en to us, that we may give it to others. And if hath been liberal to us in the bleſſings of this life, on purpoſe to give us an opportunity, and to engage be ſo to others that ſtand in need of our charity; we are falſe to our truſt, if we keep thoſe things ourſelves, which we receive from GOD for this end, that we might diſtribute them to others, rding to the proportion of our ability and their ſſity. This is to hide our LORD's talent in a nap-, and that which thou ſtoreſt up in this caſe is un-ly detained by thee; for GOD intended it ſhould e been for bread for the hungry, and for clothes for naked, for the relief and ſupport of thoſe who e ready to periſh.

3. The uncharitable man is impious in ſlighting of 's providence. He does not conſider that riches

and poverty are of the LORD, that he can ſoon chan... our condition, and that it is an eaſy thing with him ... make a rich man poor. We do not ſufficiently re... verence the providence which rules the world, ... when GOD hath bleſſed us with plenty and abun... dance, we have no pity and regard for thoſe that are ... need. GOD can ſoon turn the wheel, and lay thee ... low as the poor man whom thou doſt neglect. He ... can *caſt down the mighty from their ſeat, and exalt the humble and meek*; *fill the hungry with good things, and ſend the rich empty away*.

GOD's providence could eaſily have diſpoſed ... things otherwiſe, to have ſecured every man from ... want: but he hath on purpoſe ordered this variety of conditions, high and low, rich and poor, not that ſome men might have an advantage to inſult over and deſpiſe others, but that there might be an opportunity for the exerciſe of ſeveral virtues; that the poor might have an opportunity to exerciſe their dependence upon GOD, and their patience and ſubmiſſion to his will; and that the rich might ſhew their temperance, their moderation, and charity.

4. Unmercifulneſs to the poor is a plain demonſtration that we do not love GOD, and that all our other pretences to religion are hypocritical and inſincere. St James tells us, that *pure religion and undefiled before* GOD *and the* FATHER, *is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and the widow*, James i. 27. That *wiſdom which is from above is full of mercy and good fruits*, chap. iii. 17. St John repreſents this unchariſitable diſpoſition as utterly inconſiſtent with the true love of GOD, 1 John iii. 17. *But whoſo hath this world's goods, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him; how dwelleth the love of* GOD *in him?* In vain does ſo... a man pretend to love GOD; nay, chap. iv. ver. ... he tells us, that it is impoſſible ſuch a man ſhould love GOD. *If a man ſay I love* GOD, *and hateth his*

ther, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love GOD *whom he hath not ſeen?* This deſerves to be ſeriouſly conſidered by thoſe who make a great ſhew of devotion, and are at great pains in prayer, and faſting, and reading, and hearing the word of GOD, and in all other frugal exerciſes of religion, which ſtand them in no money; but all their labour be loſt for want of this one neceſſary and eſſential part; leſt with the young man in the goſpel, after they have kept all other commandments, they be rejected by CHRIST for lack of *this one thing*. I have done with the firſt part of the obſervation, that unmercifulneſs is a very great ſin. I proceed to the

2d, That it is ſuch a ſin, as alone, and without any other guilt, is ſufficient to ruin a man for ever. The parable lays the rich man's condemnation upon this; that was the guilt of this ſin that tormented him when he was he hell. The Scripture is full of ſevere threatnings againſt this ſin. Prov. xxi. 13. *Whoſo ſtoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he alſo ſhall cry himſelf, but ſhall not be heard.* GOD will have no regard or pity for the man that regardeth not the poor. That is a terrible text, James ii. 13. *He ſhall have judgment without mercy, that hath ſhewed no mercy.*

Our SAVIOUR hath two parables to repreſent to us the danger of this ſin; this here in the text, and that in Luke xii. concerning the covetous man that enlarged his barns, and was ſtill laying up, but laid nothing out upon the poor: upon which our SAVIOUR makes this obſervation, which is the moral of the parable, ver. 21. *So is he that layeth up treaſure for himſelf, and is not rich towards* GOD; ſo ſhall he be, ſuch an iſſue of his folly may every one expect, who heaps up treaſure for himſelf, but does not lay up treaſure with GOD. How is that? the Scripture tells us by works of mercy and charity; this our SAVI-

OUR calls *laying up for ourſelves treaſures in heaven* Matth. vi. 20. And Luke xii. 33. he calls giving alms, *providing for ourſelves bags that wax not old a treaſure in heaven that faileth not.*

There is no particular grace and virtue to which the promiſe of eternal life is ſo frequently made in Scripture, as to this of mercy and charity to the poor. Matth. v. *Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy.* Which promiſe, as it does not exclude a reward in this world, ſo it ſeems principally tó reſpect the mercy of GOD at the great day. Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14. *When thou makeſt a feaſt, invite not the rich for they will recompenſe thee again: but invite the poor and the maimed, and the lame, and the blind, for they cannot recompenſe thee; but thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the juſt.* Luke xvi. 9. *Make therefore to yourſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when ye ſhall fail, they may receive you into everlaſting habitations.* 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be good, that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation,* as the word θεμέλιον ſometimes uſed, *a good treaſure againſt the time which is to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life.*

But the moſt conſiderable text of all other to the purpoſe, is in Matth. xxv. where our SAVIOUR gives us a deſcription of the judgment of the great day: and if that be a true and proper repreſentation of the proceſs of that day, then the grand enquiry will be what works of charity have been done or neglected by us, and accordingly ſentence ſhall be paſſed upon us.

The proper reſult from all this diſcourſe is to perſuade men to this neceſſary duty. Our eternal happineſs does not ſo much depend upon the exerciſe of any one ſingle grace or virtue, as this of charity and mercy. Faith and repentance are more general and fundamental graces

es, and as it were the parents of all the reſt: but ll ſingle virtues the Scripture lays the greateſt ght upon this of charity; and if we do truly be- e the precepts of the goſpel, and the promiſes and atnings of it, we cannot but have a principal re- d to it.

I know how averſe men generally are to this duty, ich makes them ſo full of excuſes and objections inſt it.

1. They have children to provide for. This is not e caſe of all, and they whoſe caſe it is, may do well conſider, that it will not be amiſs to leave a bleſſing, well as an inheritance to their children.

2. They tell us they intend to do ſomething when ey die. I doubt that very much; but granting their ention to be real, why ſhould men chooſe to ſpoil good work, and take away the grace and acceptable- s of it, by the manner of doing? it ſhews a great kwardneſs to the work, when we defer it as long we can. He that will not do good, till he be forced the laſt neceſſity, *diu noluit, was long unwilling.* is one of the worſt compliments we can put upon D, to give a thing to him when we can keep it no ger.

3. Others ſay they may come to want themſelves, it is prudence to provide againſt that. To this nſwer,

(1.) I believe that no man ever came the ſooner to ut for his charity. David hath an expreſs obſerva- n to the contrary, Pſal. xxxvii. 25. *I have been ng, and now am old, yet I have not ſeen the righteous ſaken, nor his ſeed begging bread.* And tho' he uſes general word, yet that by the righteous here he in- ded the merciful man, is evident from the next rds, *he is ever merciful and lendeth.*

And beſides David's obſervation, we have expreſs miſes of GOD to ſecure us againſt this fear. Pſal. 1, 2. *Bleſſed is he that conſidereth the poor, the RD will deliver him in time of trouble, the* LORD

will preſerve him and keep him alive, and he ſhall b bleſſed upon the earth. Prov. xxviii. 27. *He that give unto the poor ſhall not lack.*

(2.) Thou mayeſt come to want tho' thou gi nothing; thou mayeſt loſe that which thou haſt ſpar in this kind as well as the reſt; thou mayeſt loſe al and then thou art no better ſecured againſt want, th if thou hadſt been charitable. Beſides that, wh thou art brought to poverty, thou wilt want the com fort of having done this duty, and mayeſt juſtly loo upon the neglect of this duty as one of the cauſes o thy poverty.

(3.) After all our care to provide for ourſelves, w muſt truſt the providence of GOD; and a man can i no caſe ſo ſafely *commit himſelf to* GOD, *as in well doing.* If the providence of GOD (as we all believe be peculiarly concerned to bleſs one man more tha another, I dare ſay the charitable man will not ha the leaſt portion.

4. There is a worſe objection than all theſe ma by ſome grave men, who would be glad under preten of piety to ſlip themſelves out of this duty; and th is this, that it ſavours of popery to preſs good wo with ſo much earneſtneſs upon men, as if we co merit heaven by them; ſo that they dare not be ch ritable out of a pious fear, as they pretend, leſt here they ſhould entertain the doctrine of merit.

But if the truth were known, I doubt covetouſne lies at the bottom of this objection: however it is f it ſhould be anſwered. And,

(1.) I ſay that no man, that is not prejudiced eithe by his education or intereſt, can think that a creatur can merit any thing at the hand of GOD, to whom all that we can poſſibly do, is antecedently due; much leſs that we can merit ſo great a reward as that o eternal happineſs.

(2.) Tho' we deny the merit of good works, ye we firmly believe the neceſſity of them to eternal life.

And

that they are neceſſary to eternal life, is as good gument to perſuade a wiſe man to do them, as if were meritorious; unleſs a man be ſo vain-glo-, as to think heaven not worth the having, unleſs rchaſe it himſelf at a valuable conſideration.

nd now let me earneſtly intreat you, as you love and your own ſouls, not to neglect this duty; you bring yourſelves to the ſame miſerable ſtate this rich man, to whom the leaſt charity that be aſked was denied. Our SAVIOUR hath pur-y left this parable on record, to be a teſtimony a witneſs to us; leſt we being guilty of the ſame *ſhould come into the ſame place of torment.*

nd if any aſk me according to what proportion of eſtate he ought to be charitable? I cannot determine . Only, let no man neglect his duty, becauſe I can-(and it may be no one elſe can) tell him the exact ortion of his charity to his eſtate. There are duties that are ſtrictly determined, as thoſe of ce; but GOD hath left our charity to be *a free-offering*. In the proportion of this duty, every muſt determine himſelf by prudence and the love GOD: GOD hath left this duty undetermined, to he largeneſs of our hearts towards him; only to urage us to be *abundant in this grace*, he hath niſed, that according to the proportion of our ity, ſhall be the degree of our happineſs, 2 Cor. . *He that ſoweth plentifully, ſhall reap plentifully.* let us be ſure to do ſomething in this kind; any of our eſtate rather than none.

will conclude with that excellent counſel of the of Syrach, Eccl. iv. *My ſon, defraud not the poor, make not the needy eye to wait long; make not a ry ſoul ſorrowful, neither provoke a man in his ef; add not more trouble to a heart that is vexed, not to give to him that is in need. Reject not the lication of the afflicted, nor turn away thy face a poor man; turn not away thy eye from the needy,*

and

and give him none occaſion to curſe thee. For if he curſe thee in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, his prayer ſhall be heard of him that made him. Let it not grieve thee to bow down thine ear to the poor, and give him a friendly anſwer with meekneſs. Be as a father to the fatherleſs, and inſtead of a huſband to their mother; ſo ſhalt thou be as the SON *of the moſt high, and he ſhall love thee more than thy mother doth.*

SERMON

SERMON CXXVII.

The parable of the rich man, and Lazarus.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

LUKE xvi. 19, 20.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day: and there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of ſores.

I Proceed to our ſecond obſervation, that a man may be poor and miſerable in this world, and yet dear to GOD. The beggar Lazarus, tho' he was ſo much ſlighted, and deſpiſed in his life-time by the great rich man, yet it appeared when he came to die, that he was not neglected by GOD, for *he gave his angels charge concerning him*, to convey him to happineſs, ver. 22. *the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's boſom.*

But this truth is not only repreſented to us in a parable, but exemplified in the life of our bleſſed SAVIOUR. Never was any man ſo dear to GOD as he was, for he was *his only begotten* SON, *his beloved* SON, *in whom he was well pleaſed*: and yet how poor and mean was his condition in this world! inſomuch that the Jews were offended at him, and could not own him that appeared in ſo much meanneſs, for the true MESSIAS,

MESSIAS. He was born of mean parents, and persecuted as soon as he was born; he was destitute of worldly accommodations; *the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; but the* SON *of man had not where to lay his head. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*

GOD could have sent his SON into the world with majesty and great glory, and have made all the kings of the earth to have bowed before him, and paid homage to him: but the wisdom of GOD chose rather that he should appear in a poor and humble, in a suffering and afflicted condition, to confound the pride of the world, who measure the love of GOD by the outward things, and think that GOD hates all those whom he permits to be afflicted.

Now it was not possible to give a greater and clearer demonstration of this truth, that goodness and suffering may meet together in the same person, than in the SON of GOD, *who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; yet it pleased the* LORD *to bruise him and to put him to grief.*

Afflictions in this world are so far from being a sign of GOD's hatred, that they are an argument of his love and care; *whom the* LORD *loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Those designs for great things hereafter, he trains up by great hardships in this world, and by many tribulations prepares them for a kingdom. This course GOD took more especially in the first planting of Christianity; the poor chiefly were those that received the gospel. *Not many mighty, nor many noble; but the base things of the world, and the things that were despised, did* GOD *choose. Hearken my beloved brethren,* (saith St. James, chap. ii. 5.) *hath not* GOD *chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*

Now this consideration should persuade to patience under the greatest sufferings and afflictions in this world. GOD may be our FATHER, and chasten us severely, nay

this very thing is rather an argument that he is GOD may love us, tho' the world hate us. 'Tis exercising a little patience, and these storms will over, and we shall be removed into a calmer n, where *all tears shall be wiped from our eyes; death and sorrow shall be no more.* This was the ion of the SON of GOD here; but *it is a faithful g, that if we be dead with him, we shall also live him; if we suffer with him, we shall also reign him.* Therefore those who suffer in this world t not to be moved, *as tho' some strange thing hapd unto them; but they should rather rejoice, in as h as they are partakers of* CHRIST's *sufferings, when his glory shall be revealed, they also may be with exceeding joy,* 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13. I proceed

hird observation, which is the different estate of d and bad men after this life; *Lazarus died, and carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the man died, and went to hell.* This the justice of providence seems to require; so that if there been no revelation of GOD to this purpose, it is ing very credible to natural reason, whether we der GOD or ourselves. If we consider GOD, our n tells us, that he is the holy and righteous go- or of the world, and consequently, that he loves ness and hates sin, and therefore is concerned to tenance the one, and discountenance the other, ch a solemn and publick manner, as may vindicate holiness and justice to the world. Now the disations of his providence are promiscuous in this ld; and therefore it seems very reasonable, that e should be a general assize, a fair and open trial; n GOD *will render to every man according to his rks.*

And if we consider ourselves, this will appear very ible; for this has been the constant opinion, not of the common people, but of the wisest per-, who had only the light of nature to guide them.

Nay,

Nay, if we do but ſearch our own conſciences, we ſhall find an inward and ſecret acknowledgment of this, in that inward peace and ſatisfaction we find in any good action, and in that ſhame and fear and horror that haunts a man after the commiſſion of an ill though never ſo ſecret a ſin.

And as reaſon and Scripture together do aſſure us of a future judgment; ſo likewiſe, that men, when they paſs out of this world, ſhall meet with the proper conſequences and rewards of their actions in the other. And though the happineſs or miſery of men be not compleat as it ſhall be after the publick judgment; yet it is unſpeakably great. Lazarus is repreſented as very happy immediately after his paſſing out of this world; he is ſaid to be *caried into Abraham's boſom*; by which the Jews expreſs the happineſs of the future ſtate. And the rich man is repreſented, as in great anguish and torment. But what the happineſs of good men, and the miſery of wicked men ſhall be in the other ſtate, we can but now imperfectly and unſkilfully deſcribe. Each of theſe I have in another diſcourſe ſpoken ſomething to. I proceed to a

Fourth obſervation, the vaſt difference between men's conditions in this world and the other. The rich man proſpered here, and was afterwards tormented. Lazarus was poor and miſerable in this world, and happy in the other; ver. 25. *Remember that thou in thy life-time receivedſt thy good things, and Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* And it is very agreeable to the wiſdom of GOD, to make ſuch a difference between men's conditions in this world and the other; and that for theſe two reaſons.

1ſt, For the trying of men's virtue.

2dly, In order to the recompenſing of it.

1. For the trial of men's virtue. For this end principally GOD ordains the ſufferings of good men

* *Sermon* CLXIII *on Rom.* vi. 21, 22.

permits the beſt of his ſervants many times to involved in the greateſt calamities, to try their faith him, and love to him; to improve their virtue, to prevent thoſe ſins into which the mighty ptations of a perpetual proſperity are apt to draw the beſt of men; to take off their affections the love of this vain world, and to engage fix them there, where they ſhall never repent they have placed them; to prove their ſincerity ards GOD, and to exerciſe their patience and miſſion to his will; to prepare them for the y of the next life, and to make the happineſs of ven more welcome to them, when they ſhall e to it.

dly, In order to the recompenſing of men: that who will take up with the pleaſures and enments of this preſent world, and take no care their future ſtate, that they who will gratify their es, and neglect their immortal ſouls, may inherit proper conſequences of their wretched choice. on the other hand, that they who love GOD ve all things, and had rather endure the greateſt , than do the leaſt, that they who look beyond preſent ſcene of things, and believe the reaand eternity of the other ſtate, and live acingly, may not be diſappointed in their hopes, ſerve GOD and ſuffer for him for nothing. m this conſideration of the difference between condition of men in this world and the other, may infer,

1. That no man ſhould meaſure his felicity or appineſs by his lot in this world. If thou reedſt thy good things, art rich and honourable, haſt as much of the things of this world as e heart can wiſh, art ſplendidly attired, and ſt *ſumptuouſly every day*; art *in no trouble like r men, neither art plagued like other folk*; do not n this bleſs thyſelf as the happy man. On the r hand, art thou poor and miſerable, deſti-

tute of all the conveniences and accommodations o
this life? do not repine at thy lot, and murmu
at God for having dealt hardly with thee. N
man can be pronounced happy or miserable f
what befals him in this life; *no man knows love*
hatred by these things; this life is but a short a
inconsiderable duration, and it matters not much wh
entertainment we meet withal, as we are passi
through this world: the state of eternity is th
wherein the happiness or misery of men shall be d
termined. He is the happy man who is so in th
life which shall never have an end; and he is mi
rable that shall be so for ever.

2. We should not set too great a value up
the blessings of this life. We may *receive our go*
things here, and *be tormented* hereafter; nay, th
very thing will be no inconsiderable part of o
torment, none of the least aggravations of our m
sery, that we *did did receive our good things*. N
thing afflicts a man more, and toucheth him mo
sensibly when he is in misery, than the remembra
of his former prosperity; had he never beeen ha
his misery would be the less.

Therefore we should be so far from applaud
ourselves in the prosperity of this world, that
should rather be afraid of *receiving our good thi*
here; lest God should put us off with these thin
and this should be all our portion, and lest our mis
in the next world be the greater for our having b
happy.

The felicities of this world are transient, and th
our happiness were never so compleat, yet it is go
off, and passing away; and when it is gone and p
if misery succeed it, it had better never have b
Remember, thou in thy life-time receivedst thy g
things; these things are only for our life-time,
how short is that! did men seriously consider this, th
would not set such a price upon any of the tran
enjoyments of this life, as for the sake of them
neg

glect the great concernments of another world. We are apt to be dazzled with the present glittering of worldly glory and prosperity; but if we would look on these things, as they will be shortly gone from us, how little would they signify! the rich man here in the parable did, no doubt, think himself a much happier man than poor Lazarus that lay at his door; and yet after a little while how glad would he have been to have changed conditions with this poor man! when he was *in torments*, then no doubt he wished that he had suffered all the misery and want in this world which Lazarus did, provided he might have been comforted as he was, and *carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.* We should value this world, and look upon it, as this rich man did, not when he enjoyed it, but when he was taken from it; and we should esteem it, and use it while we may, as he wished he had done when it was too late.

3. We should not be excessively troubled if we meet with hardship and affliction here in this world; because those whom GOD designs for the greatest happiness hereafter, may receive evil things here. Thus our blessed SAVIOUR, *the captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings*; this was the method which GOD used towards his own SON, *he suffered, and then entered into glory.* He suffered more than any of us can bear; and yet he supported himself under all his sufferings by the consideration of the glory that would follow; *for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame.*

The same consideration should arm us with patience and constancy under the greatest evils of this life. The evils that we lie under are passing and coming off; but the happiness is to come. And if the happiness of the next world were no greater, and of longer continuance, than the miseries of this world; or if they did equally answer one another; yet a wise man would choose to have misery first,

and his happineſs laſt. For if his happineſs were firſt, all the pleaſure and comfort of it would be eaten out by diſmal apprehenſions of what was to follow: but his ſufferings, if they were firſt, would be ſweetened by the conſideration of his future happineſs; and the bitterneſs of his ſufferings would give a quicker reliſh to his happineſs when it ſhould come, and make it greater.

But a good man under the ſufferings of this life, hath not only this comfort, that his happineſs is to come, but likewiſe that it ſhall be infinitely greater than his ſufferings; that theſe are but ſhort, but that ſhall never have an end. And this was that which fortified the firſt Chriſtians againſt all that the malice and cruelty of the world could do againſt them. They thought themſelves well paid, if *through many tribulations they might at laſt enter into the kingdom of* God; becauſe they believed that the joys of the next life would abundantly recompenſe all their labours and ſufferings in this world. They expected a mighty reward far beyond all their ſufferings; they were firmly perſuaded that they ſhould be vaſt gainers at the laſt. So the apoſtle tells us of himſelf, Rom. viii. 18. *I reckon that the ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed.* And to the ſame purpoſe, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. *Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us an eternal weight of glory, whilſt we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are eternal.* If we would conſider all things together, and fix our eyes as much upon the happineſs and glory of the next world, as upon the pomp and ſplendor of this; if we would look as much at *the things which are not ſeen, as the things which are ſeen*, we ſhould eaſily perceive, that he who ſuffers in this world does not renounce his happineſs, only

ly puts it out to intereſt, upon terms of the greateſt vantage.

4. We ſhould do all things with regard to our ure and eternal ſtate. It matters not much what condition is in this world, becauſe that's to ntinue but for a little while: but we ought to re a great and ſerious regard to that ſtate that ver ſhall have an end. Therefore whenever we doing any thing, we ſhould conſider what inence ſuch an action will have upon the happineſs miſery of the next life. We ſhould meaſure ry action and every condition of our lives by the erence of them to eternity. To be rich and great this world will contribute nothing to our future ppineſs; all theſe things which we ſo much dote on, and purſue with ſo much eagerneſs, will not mmend any man to GOD: they will ſignify nong when we come to appear before our Judge. ath will ſtrip us of theſe things, and in the other rld, the ſoul of the pooreſt man that ever lived ll be upon equal terms with the richeſt. Nothing holineſs and virtue will then avail us; and it is a little while and we ſhall all certainly be of this d, that the beſt thing men can do in this world, is rovide for the other. I proceed to a

ifth obſervation, that the ſtate of men in the t world is fixed and unchangeable; which I ground n ver. 26. *Between us and you there is a great f fixed, ſo that they that would paſs from hence you cannot, neither can they paſs to us that would from thence.* By which words our SAVIOUR ns not only to intend, that they that are in ven and hell can have no communication and inourſe with one another; but likewiſe that they lodged in an immutable ſtate. Thoſe that are py are like to continue ſo; and thoſe that are erable are immutably fixed in that ſtate.

1. As to thoſe that are in happineſs there can be great doubt. For what can tempt men that

have so narrowly escaped the dangers and temptations of a wicked world, and are possessed of so great a happiness by the free grace and mercy of God, to do any thing whereby they may forfeit their happiness; or so much as to entertain a thought of offending that God, to whom they cannot but be sensible how infinitely they are obliged? In this imperfect state, few men have so little goodness as to sin without temptation; but in that state when men are perfectly good, and can have no temptation to be otherwise, it is not imaginable that they should fall from that state.

2. As to the state of the damned, that that likewise is immutable the Scripture does seem plainly enough to assert, when it calls it *an everlasting destruction from the presence of the* Lord, and uses such expressions to set forth the continuance of their misery, as signify the longest and most interminable duration, expressions of as great an extent as those which are used to signify the eternal happiness of the blessed; and as large and unlimited, as any are to be had in those languages wherein the Scriptures are written.

Besides that wicked men in the other world are in Scripture represented as in the same condition with the devils, of whom there is no ground to believe that any of them ever did or will repent. Not because repentance is impossible in it's own nature to those that are in extreme misery; but because there is no place left for it. Being under an irreversible doom, there is no encouragement to repentance, no hope of mercy and pardon, without which repentance is impossible. For if a man did utterly despair of pardon, and were assured upon good ground, that God would never shew mercy to him, in this case a man would grow desperate, and not care what he did. He that knows whatever he does he is miserable and undone, will not matter how he demeans himself. All motives to repentance are gone

a man once knows it will be to no purpose. this the Scripture seems to represent to us, as case of the devils and damned spirits. Because ir state is finally determined, and they are con- led under an irreversible sentence, therefore re- tance is impossible to them.

Sorry, no doubt, they are, and heartily troubled t by their own sin and folly they have brought this ery upon themselves, and they cannot but conceive everlasting displeasure against themselves, for hav- been the cause and authors of their own ruin; and reflexion of this will be a perpetual spring of dis- tent, and fill their minds with eternal rage and tion; and so long as they feel the intolerable nishments of sin, and groan under the insupportable ments of it, and see no end of this miserable state, hope of getting out of it, they can be no other- affected, than with discontent to themselves, and and fury against God.

They are indeed penitent so far as to be troubled themselves for what they have done; but this trou- works no change or alteration in them; they hate God who inflicts these punishments upon m, and who they believe is determined to con- them in this miserable state. The present an- h of their condition, and their despair of bettering makes them mad; and their minds are so di- ted by the wildness of their passions, and their its so exasperated and set on fire by their own y motions, that there can be no rest and silence eir souls, not so much as the liberty of one calm sedate thought.

Or if at any time they reflect upon the evil of their , and should entertain any thoughts of returning God and their duty, they are presently checked h this consideration, that their case is determined, God is implacably offended with them, and is orably and peremptorily resolved to make them rable for ever; and during this persuasion, no

man

man can return to the love of GOD and goodneſs, without which there can be no repentance.

This conſideration, of the immutable ſtate of men after this life, ſhould engage us with all ſerioufneſs and diligence to endeavour to ſecure our future happineſs. GOD hath *ſet before us good and evil, life and death*, and we may yet chooſe which we pleaſe; but in the other world, we muſt ſtand to that choice which we have made here, and inherit the conſequences of it.

By ſin mankind is brought into a miſerable ſtate; but our condition is not deſperate and paſt remedy. GOD hath ſent his SON *to be a* PRINCE *and a* SAVIOUR, *to give repentance and remiſſion of ſins*. So that though our caſe be bad, it need not continue ſo, if it be not our own fault. There is a poſſibility now of changing our condition for the better, and of laying the foundation of a perpetual happineſs for ourſelves. The grace of GOD calls upon us, and is ready to aſſiſt us; ſo that no man's caſe is ſo bad, but there is a poſſibility of bettering it, if we be not wanting to ourſelves, and will make uſe of the grace which GOD offers, who is never wanting to the ſincere endeavours of men. Under the influence and aſſiſtance of this grace, thoſe who are *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, may paſs from death to life*, may be *turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto* GOD. So long as we are in this world there is a poſſibility of being tranſlated from one ſtate to another, from the *dominion of Satan into the kingdom of* GOD's *dear* SON. But if we neglect the opportunities of this life, and ſtand out againſt the offers of GOD's grace and mercy, there will no overtures be made to us in the other world. After this life is ended, GOD will try us no more; our final miſcarriage in this world will prove fatal to us in the other, and we ſhall not be permitted to live over again to correct our errors. *As the tree falls, ſo it ſhall lie*; ſuch a ſtate as we are

settled in, when we go out of this world, shall fixed in the other, and there will be no possibi- of changing it. We are yet in the hand of our counsel, and by GOD's grace we may mould fashion our own fortune. But if we trifle away advantage, we shall *fall into the hands of the ing* GOD, out of which there is no redemption. OD hath yet left heaven and hell to our choice, and had need to look about us, and choose well, who choose but once for all and for ever. There is yet pace and opportunity left us of repentance; but so on as we step out of this life, and are entered upon other world, our condition will be sealed, never be reversed. And because after this life there will no further hopes of mercy, there will be no pos- ility of repentance. *This is the accepted time, this the day of salvation; therefore to day if ye will hear voice, harden not your hearts; lest* GOD *swear in wrath, that we shall not enter into his rest.* I pro- d to a

Sixth observation, that a standing revelation of D is evidence sufficient for divine things. *They e Moses and the prophets, let them hear them*; is, they have the books of Moses and the pro- s, written by men divinely inspired, these do suf- ntly declare to them the will of GOD and their ; and it is unreasonable to demand or expect GOD should do more for their conviction and faction.

I know very well the text speaks only of the Scrip- s of the Old Testament, those of the New being then extant when this parable was delivered. what is here said concerning the Scriptures of the Testament, is equally applicable to the New; though Abraham do only recommend Moses the prophets, there is no doubt but he would have the same concerning CHRIST and his apostles, he books of the New Testament had been then ex-

tant.

tant. So that what I ſhall ſay upon this obſervation does indifferently concern the whole Scripture.

And that I may make out this obſervation more fully, I ſhall take theſe five things into conſideration.

1ſt, What we are to underſtand by a divine revelation.

2dly, Give a brief account of the ſeveral kinds of it.

3dly, Shew what advantage this ſtanding revelation of the Scriptures hath above any other way of conveying the will of GOD to the world.

4thly, That there is ſufficient evidence for the divinity of the Scriptures.

5thly, That it is unreaſonable to expect that God ſhould do more for our conviction, than to afford ſuch a ſtanding revelation of his mind and will. I ſhall go over theſe as briefly as I can. I begin with the

1ſt, What we are to underſtand by a divine revelation. By a divine revelation we are to underſtand *a ſupernatural diſcovery, or manifeſtation of a thing to us*; I ſay, *ſupernatural*, becauſe it may either be immediately by GOD; or by the mediation of angels, as moſt, if not all the revelations of the Old Teſtament were. *A ſupernatural diſcovery or manifeſtation*, either immediately to our minds, or our underſtandings and inward faculties; (for I do not ſo well underſtand the diſtinction between underſtanding and imagination, as to be careful to take notice of it) or elſe mediately to our underſtandings by the mediation of our outward ſenſes, as by an external appearance to our bodily eyes, or by a voice and ſound to the ſenſe of hearing. *A diſcovery or manifeſtation of a thing*, whether it be ſuch as cannot be known at all by the uſe of our natural reaſon and underſtandings; or ſuch as may be diſcovered by natural light, but is more clearly revealed or made known, or we are awakened to a more particular and attentive con-

ſideration

tion of it. For it is not at all unſuitable to the om of GOD, to make a ſupernatural diſcovery to of ſuch things as may be known by the light of re, either to give us a clearer manifeſtation of truths as were more obſcurely known, and did as were lie buried in our underſtandings; or elſe to ken our minds to a more ſerious and lively con- ation of thoſe truths.

dly, For the ſeveral kinds of divine revelations. t they were various, the apoſtle to the Hebrews us, chap. i. 1. GOD *who at ſundry times, and in rs manners, ſpake to the fathers by the prophets*; re by prophets we are to underſtand not only thoſe did foretel future things; but any perſon that was ely inſpired, and to whom GOD was pleaſed to e any ſupernatural diſcovery of himſelf.

Now the ſeveral kinds of revelation taken notice by the Jews, are viſions; dreams; propheſy; ora- ; inſpiration, or that which we call the HOLY OST; voice *Bath-col*; or that which was the heſt of all, which they call *gradus Moſaicus*, the ce of revelation which was peculiar to Moſes. Jewiſh writers, eſpecially Maimonides, have many le obſervations about the differences of theſe ſeveral s of revelation, which depend upon ſubtle and oſophical diſtinctions of the faculties of perception; hat ſome of theſe revelations were by impreſſion upon the underſtanding; ſome only upon the gination; ſome upon both; ſome upon the outward es; but the ſimple and plain difference between m, ſo far as there is any ground in Scripture to nguiſh them, ſeems to be this; viſion was a repre- tation of ſomething to a man, when he was waking, oppoſition to dreams, which were repreſentations le to men in their ſleep. Propheſy might be either am or viſion, and the Jews obſerve, that it was ays one of theſe two ways, which they grounded n Numb. xii. 6. *If there be a prophet among you, LORD will make myſelf known to him in a viſion,*

and

and will speak unto him in a dream. But prophesy, the strict notion of it, had this peculiarly belongi to it, that it was not only monitory or instructiv but did foretel some event of concernment to other and the Jewish doctors tell us, that it was a clea revelation, and carried a greater assurance along wi it, and that this was common to all the three, th there was something of extasy and transport of mi in all these.

The fourth sort of revelation, which was by orac which is called Urim and Thummim, was a render of answers to questions, by the high-priest looki upon the stones in the breast-plate, which how it w done, is uncertain.

The fifth sort of revelation is that which they c the HOLY GHOST, which was a more calm a gentle inspiration, without any extraordinary transpo of mind or extasy; such as David had in the writi of the psalms.

The lowest of all was that which they called *Ba col*, which was by a voice from heaven; and this the way of revelation, which the Jews observed only continue among them from the days of the p phet Malachi to our SAVIOUR.

The highest of all was that which they ca *gradus Mosaicus*, to which the Jews give several pr rogatives above all the other ways of revelation; that it was done by impression merely upon t understanding, without extasy, or rapture, or transpo when he was waking, and in his ordinary temper, a his senses not bound up either by extasy or sleep, th it was a revelation immediately from GOD himse and not by the mediation of angels, without any fe or amazement, or fainting, which was incident other prophets; and the spirit of prophesy rested up him, and he could exert it arbitrarily, and put it for when he would. Of which thus much is evident true from the story of him, that the spirit of prophe did rest more constantly upon him, and that he cou

exe

t it with greater freedom, and without any dis-
ible amazement or transport from his ordinary
per. But that it was by impression merely upon
understanding, as that is a distinct faculty from
imagination, is not so certain: that it was always
an immediate communication from GOD, without
mediation of angels, seems not to be true; for
Stephen tells us, that *the law was given by the*
position of angels, Acts vii. 53. And St Paul, that
was ordained by the angels in the hand of a mediator,
is Moses, Gal. iii. 19. But that the revelation,
ich was made to him, had some singular preroga-
s above those of other prophets, is plain from
ipture, Numb. xii. 5, 6, 7, 8. when Aaron and
iam contended with Moses as being equal to him,
D tells them that there was a vast difference between
and other prophets; *hear now my words, if there*
prophet among you, I the LORD *will make myself*
wn unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him
dream. My servant Moses is not so.---With him
I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not
ark speeches, &c. Exod. xxxiii. 11. *And the* LORD
e unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto
friend. Deut. xxxiv. 10. *And there arose not a*
bet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD
w face to face. All which signify at least this,
GOD made the clearest, and most familiar, and
perfect discoveries to Moses of any of the pro-
ts; only our LORD JESUS CHRIST, by whom
D hath discovered his will to us under the New
tament, did excel Moses; Moses being but *a faith-*
servant, that is, *humilis amicus*, a meaner sort of
nd; but *the* LORD JESUS CHRIST, *the only be-*
n SON *of* GOD, who came from *the bosom of his*
THER, and was intimately acquainted with the
ts of his will, and *had not the* SPIRIT *given*
by measure, but the most plentiful effusion of it,
anointed above his fellows.

Now these being the several sorts and degrees of revelation, which GOD hath made of himself to the world, the Holy Scriptures are a system or collection of these, the authentick instruments or record, by which the things revealed any of these ways, are transmitted to us, and is therefore called *the word of* GOD, as containing those things which GOD in several ages hath spoken to the world; that is, matters of divine revelation, which are necessary to be known by men, in order to their eternal happiness. And this being now the great and standing revelation of GOD, which is to continue to the end of the world, I intend to limit my discourse solely to this, as being the only revelation which we are concerned to enquire after.

And therefore in the third place, to shew you what advantage this standing revelation of the Scriptures hath above private revelations made to particular persons and frequently repeated and renewed in several ages, that so it may appear both agreeable to the wisdom of GOD to settle revelations in this way, as being more commodious; and likewise to his goodness, it being a real privilege which these latter ages of the world enjoy, that they have a more fixed and certain way of being acquainted with the will of GOD, than those ages had, which were governed by such private revelations, as were now and then made to particular persons. And the advantages are these.

1. It is a most certain way of conveyance of things and more secure and free from imposture. Suppose a revelation made to a particular person, which is of general concernment, that this may have a general and lasting effect, he must impart it to others, as many as he can, and give them the best assurance he can of it; and these must relate it to others; and so it must pass from hand to hand, to be delivered from parents to their children. Now this way of conveying a revelation by oral report, musts needs be liable to many uncertainties, both by involuntary mistakes, through weakness of memory or understanding; and wilful

ilful falsifications and impostures, out of malice and
ign. So that the effect of an unrecorded revelation
, neither be large nor lasting, it can but reach
ew persons, and continue a little while in it's full
dibility; and the farther it goes, the weaker, like
rcles made in water, which the more they enlarge
emselves, and the longer they continue the less dis-
rnible they are, 'till at length they quite disappear.
hereas being once recorded by persons secured from
ror by supernatural and divine assistance, they are
t liable to those easy falsifications or mistakes,
hich traditional reports and relations are necessarily,
ro' human malice or weakness, liable to.

2. It is a more general and universal way of con-
yance; which is evident from the common expe-
nce of the world, who have pitched upon this way
writing things in books, as that which doth most
ily convey the knowledge and notice of things to
e generality of men.

3. It is a more uniform way of conveyance; that
things that are once written and propagated that
y, lie equally open to all, and come in a manner
h equal credit to all; it being not morally pos-
le that a common book, that passeth through all
nds, and which is of vast importance and concern-
nt, should be liable to any material corruption,
thout a general conspiracy and agreement, which
not be, but that it must be generally known. So
t considering the commonness, and universal con-
nment of this book of the Scriptures, all men are
a manner equally, that is, every man is sufficiently
competently assured of the credit of it; that is,
t we are not in any material thing imposed upon
false copies. But in traditional revelation it is quite
herwise: tradition being a very unequal and ununi-
m way of conveyance. For seeing it may be of
neral concernment, and all cannot have it at the
t hand, that is, immediately from him to whom it
s made; but some at the second, others at the

third, fourth, or fifth hand, or much further off the credit of it will be neceſſarily weakened by every remove. A report that comes through many hands being like the argument we call induction: and as the ſtrength and goodneſs of that depends upon the truth of every one of thoſe inſtances that make it up, ſo that if any of them fail, the whole argument is naught; ſo the credit of a report that paſſeth through twenty hands, depends upon the integrity and ſufficiency of all the relators, and whatever there is either of falſhood and malice, or of incapacity of underſtanding or frailty of memory in any of the relators, ſo much of weakneſs is derived into the report or teſtimony and conſequently the aſſurance which we can have of a private revelation, which is delivered traditionally through a great many perſons, muſt needs be very unequal.

4th, It is a more laſting way of conveyance. Which likewiſe appears by experience, we having now nothing at all of the hiſtory of ancient times, but what is conveyed down to us in writing.

5. It is a more human way of conveyance, which requires leſs of miracle and ſupernatural interpoſition for the preſervation of it. This book of the Scriptures may with ordinary human care be tranſmitted entire, and free from any material error, to all ſucceeding ages: but revelations unwritten, if they have any laſting and conſiderable effect, they muſt at least in every age be renewed and repeated; otherwiſe in a very ſhort ſpace, either through the unfaithfulneſs, or careleſſneſs and frailty of men, they will either be quite loſt, or ſo corrupted and depraved, that they will ſignify nothing.

From all which it appears, that we have ſo little cauſe to murmur and repine at the providence of God which in theſe latter ages of the world does not make thoſe more immediate diſcoveries and manifeſtations of himſelf to us, that he did to former ages, that we have rather great reaſon to admire the wiſdom and goodne

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dneſs of GOD's providence, which hath privileged with this ſtanding revelation of his written word, ich hath ſo many ways the advantage of frequent extraordinary revelation, and in reſpect of the erality of mankind, is much more uſeful and ctual to it's end. I know there are ſome that have eavoured to perſuade the world, that doctrines may ch better be preſerved by common rumour and ort, than by writing and record; but I hope there no man ſo deſtitute of common ſenſe, as to believe n contrary to the experience of all men.

I come now to the fourth thing I propoſed to be ſidered; namely, That there is ſufficient evidence the divinity of the Scriptures. By the divinity of Scriptures, I mean, that they were revealed by D, and that the things contained in them were not ented by men, but diſcovered to men by GOD; and t the penmen of theſe books did not write their n private conceptions, but were inſpired by the LY GHOST. Now if we can be ſatisfied of this, ought to receive the Scriptures with the ſame reve- ce, as if an angel from heaven ſhould declare theſe gs unto us, or as if GOD ſhould immediately re- l them to our minds; for nothing can come with ater authority than this, that we believe it to be ealed by GOD; and provided we be aſſured of this, matters not which way; the thing hath the ſame hority.

Now that we have ſufficient evidence of the divinity the Scriptures, will beſt appear, by conſidering at is ſufficient to give authority to a book, ſo that prudent or reaſonable man can queſtion, but that book was writ by him whoſe name it bears. For at evidence we would accept of for the authority other books, we muſt not refuſe in this caſe for Scriptures; if we do, we deal unequally, and it ſign that we do not want evidence for the autho- y of the Scriptures, but that we have no mind to ieve them.

Now the utmoſt authority that any book is capable of, is, that it hath been tranſmitted down to us by the general and uncontrolled teſtimony of all ages, and that the authority of it was never queſtioned in the age wherein it was written, nor invalidated ever ſince.

And this evidence we have for the authority of the Scriptures. As for the Old Teſtament, I ſhall not now labour in the proof of that by arguments proper to itſelf, but ſhall take the divinity of them upon the authority of the New, which, if it be proved, is ſufficient evidence for it, tho' there were no other.

Now for the Scriptures of the New Teſtament I deſire but theſe two things to be granted to me at firſt.

1. That all were written by thoſe perſons whoſe names they bear: and for this we have as much authority as for any books in the world, and ſo much as may ſatisfy men in other caſes, and therefore not to be rejected in this.

2. That thoſe who wrote thoſe books were men of integrity, and did not wilfully falſify in any thing; and this cannot reaſonably be denied, becauſe theſe very perſons gave the utmoſt evidence that men could give of their integrity. The higheſt atteſtation that any man can give of the truth of what he relates, is to lay down his life for the teſtimony of it; and this the apoſtles did.

Now if this be granted, that they did not falſify in their relations concerning the miracles of CHRIST, and his reſurrection, and the miraculous gifts which were beſtowed upon the apoſtles after his aſcenſion; this is as great an evidence as the world can give, and as the thing is capable of, that our SAVIOUR was *a teacher come from* GOD, and that the apoſtles were extraordinarily aſſiſted by the HOLY GHOST; and if this be granted, what can be deſired more to prove the divinity of their writings?

But

But it may be ſaid, that tho' the apoſtles were nted to be men of integrity, and that they did not lfully falſify in their relations, yet they might be ſtaken about thoſe matters. But that they were , we have as much evidence as can be for any thing this nature, namely, that the things which are ted are plain ſenſible matters of fact, about which man need miſtake, unleſs he will; and they did write things upon the report of others, who might ſibly have deſigns to deceive, but upon the ſureſt idence in the world, their own knowledge, and the timony of their ſenſes; *the things which we have n and heard teſtify we unto you.* So that if they re miſtaken in theſe things, no man can be ſure of y thing; and by the ſame reaſon that we diſbelieve authority of the Scriptures upon this account, we ſt believe nothing at all. This is in ſhort the whole ce of the argument for the divinity of the Scriptures, ich I might have enlarged infinitely upon; but I ign now only briefly to repreſent to you, that we, o live at the diſtance of ſo many ages from the time this revelation, are not deſtitute of ſufficient evi- ce for the authority of the Scriptures, and ſuch dence, as they who reject in other caſes, are eſteemed reaſonable.

I ſhould come now to the

3th, and laſt thing, namely, That it is unreaſonable xpect, that GOD ſhould do more for our conviction, n to afford us a ſtanding revelation of his mind and , ſuch as the books of the Holy Scriptures are. this I ſhall refer to another opportunity, in a par- lar diſcourſe upon the 31ſt verſe, which contains main deſign, the ſum, and ſubſtance of this whole ble.

SERMON

SERMON CXXVIII.

The parable of the rich man, and Lazarus.

The third ſermon on this text.

Preached at Whitehall, anno 1678.

LUKE xvi. 31.

If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.

THESE words are the concluſion of the excellent parable of our SAVIOUR concerning the rich man and Lazarus, and they are the final anſwer which Abraham gives to the rich man's laſt requeſt; who being in great torment, and not able to obtain any eaſe for himſelf, is repreſented as concerned for his relations, whom he had left behind him upon earth; leſt they alſo, by their own careleſſneſs and folly, ſhould plunge themſelves into the ſame miſery that he was in, and therefore he begs of Abraham that he would *ſend Lazarus to his father's houſe*, where he had *five brethren, that he might teſtify unto them, leſt they alſo ſhould come to that place of torment.* To which requeſt Abraham anſwers, that there was no neceſſity of ſuch an extraordinary courſe to be uſed towards thoſe who had ſufficient means of conviction ſo near at hand, if they would but hearken to them

make uſe of them. *Abraham ſaith unto him, have Moſes and the prophets; let them hear them.* ut the rich man preſſeth his requeſt further, upon reaſon, that they might not perhaps be moved by ſes and the prophets, nay, it was likely they would be moved by them; for they had always had them, yet they remained impenitent: but if a ſpecial ſſenger ſhould be ſent to them from the dead, this ainly could not fail to awaken them, and bring m to repentance, ver. 30. *And he ſaid, nay, father raham, but if one went unto them from the dead, will repent.* To which Abraham makes this pe-ptory reply, *if they hear not Moſes and the pro-ts, neither will they be perſuaded, tho' one roſe from dead.*

In which words Abraham abſolutely denies that re is any ſuch probability, much leſs certainty, that ſe who reject a publick credible revelation of GOD, h as that of the Holy Scripture is, ſhould be effec-lly convinced by a meſſenger from the dead. And SAVIOUR brings in Abraham delivering himſelf y poſitively in this matter, and therefore we may ume it to be our SAVIOUR's own ſenſe, and may upon it for a truth; which however at firſt ſight ay not be ſo evident, yet I hope in the progreſs of diſcourſe to make it ſufficiently clear.

But before I undertake that, I ſhall premiſe a caution two, to prevent all miſtake in this matter.

Firſt, that we are not to underſtand theſe words too ctly and rigorouſly, as if the thing were ſimply and itſelf impoſſible, that a man, who is not convinced hearing or reading Moſes and the prophets, ſhould brought to repentance any other way. For it is y poſſible in the nature of the thing, yea, and likely ough, that a man, who is not convinced by calm idence and perſuaſion, may yet be very much wrought on by a ſtrange and amazing accident; and if one, om he had known when he was alive, ſhould ap-r to him from the dead, and declare the certainty

of

of a future ſtate, and the condition of things in an
ther world, there is little doubt to be made, but th
this would more rouze and awaken him to conſi
his danger, than all the threatenings of GOD's wor
and 'tis very poſſible, that by the concurrence of Go
grace, this might prove an effectual means to convi
ſuch a man, and to bring him to repentance. A
yet for all this, it is not probable upon the wh
matter, and if all circumſtances be duly conſidere
that this ſhould generally have a permanent effect up
men, ſo as throughly to reclaim ſuch perſons as
obſtinately reſiſt the light and counſels of Go
word.

Secondly, Another caution I would give is th
that we are not to underſtand theſe words ſo, as
weaken the force of that argument from miracles f
the proof and confirmation of a divine doctrine,
if our SAVIOUR intended to inſinuate, that miracl
are not a proper and ſufficient argument to convi
men. For our SAVIOUR does not here oppoſe Mo
and the prophets to a miraculous teſtimony; but he
vanceth the publick evidence and teſtimony, which Mo
and the prophets had above the evidence of a ſi
and private miracle; for Moſes and the prophets h
their confirmation from miracles; and miracles are t
great evidence and atteſtation which GOD hath alwa
given to the divinity of any perſon or doctrine; a
therefore Abraham cannot be thought to ſpeak an
thing to the prejudice of miracles, when he ſays,
*they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will th
be perſuaded, tho' one roſe from the dead.* Nay, ſo f
is he from that, that this reaſoning of his is rather f
the advantage of miracles. For Moſes and the pr
phets had the confirmation of many and great,
publick and unqueſtionable miracles; a credible relati
whereof was conveyed down to after-ages. So th
if rational means of conviction were the thing deſire
it was not likely that thoſe, who were not perſuade
by Moſes and the prophets, which were acknowledg

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ſelves to have had the confirmation of ſo many ubted miracles, ſhould in reaſon be convinced by ate and ſingle miracle.

Theſe conſiderations being premiſed by way of ion, I come now to make out the truth of what re aſſerted in the text. And for the full clearing this matter, I ſhall ſpeak to theſe two propoſi-

irſt, That it is unreaſonable to expect that God ld do more for the conviction of men, than to d them a ſtanding revelation of his mind and will ; as that of the Holy Scriptures is. And if ſo,

econdly, That upon the whole matter it is very robable, that thoſe who reject this publick reve- on of God, ſhould be effectually convinced, tho' ſhould ſpeak to them from the dead.

irſt, That it is unreaſonable to expect that God ld do more for the conviction of men, than to d them a ſtanding revelation of his mind and will ; as that of the Holy Scriptures is. This is ſtrongly lied in Abraham's firſt anſwer, *they have Moſes the prophets, let them hear them* ; as if he had ſaid, ing ſuch means of conviction ſo near at hand, why ld they deſire and expect any other ? It is in this of the Scriptures, as in that of God's providence ; does not commonly prove his providence to men extraordinary inſtances of his power, and by changing courſe of nature, to convince every man in the ld that he governs it : but by ſtanding teſtimonies his wiſdom and power, and goodneſs ; by theſe does ſufficiently ſatisfy conſiderate men of his ernment and care of the world ; and tho' he do dom manifeſt himſelf in ſupernatural and extraordi- y ways, yet he hath not left himſelf without a neſs, by the conſtant courſe of nature, in the re- ns of day and night, in the revolutions of the ſea- s of the year, *in that he gives us rain from heaven, fruitful ſeaſons, filling our hearts with food and gladneſs* ;

gladneſs; and theſe ſtanding arguments of his pro
dence, tho' they be not ſo much taken notice of, b
cauſe they are ſo common, yet they are daily miracl
and we can hardly imagine greater, and we ſhould
ſtrangely amazed at them, but that they are ſo v
frequent and familiar.

The caſe is the ſame as to divine revelation. G
hath not thought fit to gratify the perverſe curioſi
of men, by affording to every man a particular a
immediate revelation of his mind and will: but
hath given us a ſtanding revelation, which at firſt h
the greateſt and moſt miraculous confirmation, and
hath ſtill left us ſufficient means of being aſſured
the truth of this revelation, and of the confirmati
that was at the firſt given to it; and we tempt Go
by demanding extraordinary ſigns, when we may
ceive ſo abundant ſatisfaction in an ordinary way. Th
being admitted, I ſhall proceed in the

Second place to ſhew, that it is upon the whol
matter, and all circumſtances conſidered, very impr
bable, that thoſe who reject this publick revelati
from GOD, ſhould be effectually convinced, tho' o
ſhould ſpeak to them from the dead. And this is th
which is expreſsly aſſerted here in the text, *if th
hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they
perſuaded, tho' one roſe from the dead.* Not but th
any man would be very much ſtartled and amazed,
one ſhould come from the dead to warn him of th
danger of his wicked life; but yet for all that it
very unlikely, that they who obſtinately and perverſel
refuſe to be convinced by Moſes and the prophet
would be effectually perſuaded (that is, ſo as to b
brought to repentance and reformation of their lives
tho' one ſhould riſe from the dead. And that for the
reaſons.

1. Becauſe if ſuch miracles were frequent and fami
liar, it is very probable they would have but very little
effect; and unleſs we ſuppoſe them common and ordi
nary, we have no reaſon to expect them at all.

2. Men

2. Men have as great or greater reaſon to believe threatnings of GOD's word, as the diſcourſe of that ſhould ſpeak to them from the dead.

3. The very ſame reaſon which makes men to reject counſels of GOD in his word, would in all probility hinder them from being convinced by a parular miracle.

4. Experience does abundantly teſtify, how ineffecl extraordinary ways are to convince thoſe who are ſtinately addicted and wedded to their luſts.

5. An effectual perſuaſion (that is, ſuch a belief as oduceth repentance and a good life) is the gift of OD, and depends upon the operation and concurrence GOD's grace, which there is no reaſon to expect her in an extraordinary way, or in an extraordinary gree, after men have obſtinately rejected the ordinary ans which GOD hath appointed to that end.

1. If ſuch miracles as a ſpecial meſſenger from the d to warn and admoniſh men, were frequent and miliar, it is very probable they would have but very le effect upon men, and unleſs we ſuppoſe them mon and ordinary, we have no reaſon to expect m at all. For it is unreaſonable at firſt ſight, that worſt and moſt obſtinate ſort of ſinners ſhould ex- this, as a peculiar favour and privilege to themes, and that GOD ſhould not do as much for ers, who have deſerved it more, and would proly make better uſe of it; and if theſe things were mon, it is very probable that men would not be ch moved by them. It may be, while the appreſion of ſuch a thing were freſh upon them, they ld take up ſome good reſolutions; as ſinners uſually while they are under preſent convictions of conce, and the hand of GOD, by ſome great affliction ickneſs, lies heavy upon them: but ſtill they ld be apt to defer their repentance, and put it off the preſent amazement were a little over, and terror of their firſt apprehenſions were abated and n off by degrees, and after a little while they

would return to their former course. And this is to
probable, from what we see men do in other cases no
very much remote from this. It is a very terrible an
amazing thing to see a man die, and solemnly take hi
last leave of the world. The very circumstances o
dying men are apt to strike us with horror: to hea
such a man how sensibly he will speak of the othe
world, as if he were just come from it, rather tha
going to it; how severely he will condemn himse
for the folly and wickedness of his life; with wha
passion he will wish that he had lived better, an
served GOD more sincerely; how seriously he will re
solve upon a better life, if GOD would be pleased t
raise him up, and try him but once more; with wha
zeal and earnestness he will commend to his be
friends and nearest relations a religious and virtuou
course of life, as the only thing that will minister
comfort to them when they come to be in his condi
tion. Such discourses as these are very apt to mov
and affect men for the time, and to stir up in them
very good resolutions, whilst the present fit and im
pression lasts: but because these sights are very fre
quent, they have seldom any great and permanen
effect upon men. Men consider that it is a very com
mon case, and sinners take example and encourage
ment from one another; every one is affected for th
present, but few are so effectually convinced, as t
betake themselves to a better course.

And if apparitions from the dead were as com
mon as it is for men to die, we may reasonably
presume that the discourses of dead and dying,
those that are going, and those who come from th
dead, would have much the same effect upon th
generality of men.

But if we suppose this a singular case, (which there
is no reason to do) in that case the effect would pro
bably be this; a man that were strongly addicted t
his lusts, and had no mind to leave them, would b
apt when the fright was over, to be easily persuade

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all this was merely the work of fancy and imagination; and the rather, because such things did not happen to others as well as to himself.

2. We have as great or greater reason to believe warnings or threatenings of God's word, as the discourses of one that should come to us from the dead. For the threatenings of God's word against such sins as natural light convinceth men of, have natural guilt and fears of men on their side, particular testimony of every man's conscience, the concurrent testimony of mankind to the probability of the thing; and to give us full assurance the truth and reality of them, we have a credible nation of great and unquestionable miracles wrought purpose to give testimony to those persons who nounced those threatenings, that they came from od. So that here is a very publick and authentick testimony given to the threatenings of God's nd, more suitable to the generality of mankind, of greater authority than a private apparition, a single miracle; and if that will not convince m, why should we suppose that this will?

3. The very same reason which makes men to *the counsels of* God in his word, would, all probability, hinder men from being convinced by an apparition from the dead. It is not generally for want of evidence, that men do not yield full and effectual assent to the truth of God's rd, I mean, that they do not believe it so as obey it; but from the interest of some lust. The cause is not in mens understandings, and because re is not reason enough to satisfy them, that the iptures are the word of God: but in the obstinacy their wills, which are enslaved to their lusts. And disease being there, it is not to be cured by more idence, but by more consideration, and by the grace God, and better resolutions.

The man is addicted to some vice or other, that makes him unwilling to entertain those

truths which would check and controul him in his courſe. The light of GOD's word is offenſive to him, and therefore he would ſhut it out. This account our bleſſed SAVIOUR gives of the enmity of the Jews againſt him and his doctrine, John iii. 19. *Light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved.* Upon the ſame account it is, that men reſiſt the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures; not becauſe they have ſufficient reaſon to doubt of their divine authority; but becauſe they are unwilling to be governed by them, and to conform their lives to the laws and precepts of that holy book: for the wills of men have a great influence upon their underſtandings, to make aſſent eaſy or difficult; and as many are apt to aſſent to what they have a mind to, ſo they are ſlow to believe any thing which croſſeth their humour and inclinations; ſo that though greater evidence were offered, it is likely it would not prevail with them, becauſe the matter does not ſtick there. Their wills are diſtempered, *men hate to be reformed*, and this makes them *caſt the laws of* GOD *behind their backs*: and if GOD himſelf ſhould ſpeak to them from heaven, as he did to the people of Iſrael, yet for all that, they might continue *a ſtiff-necked and rebellious people*. Though the evidence were ſuch as their underſtandings could not reſiſt; yet their wills might ſtill hold out, and the preſent condition of their minds might have no laſting influence upon their hearts and lives; ſuch a violent conviction might affect them for the preſent, but the ſenſe of it might perhaps wear off by degrees, and then they would return to their former hardneſs. Men by a long and obſtinate continuance in ſin, may bring themſelves to the temper and diſpoſition of devils; who though *they believe and tremble* at the thoughts of GOD and his threatenings, yet they are wicked ſtill; for ſo long as men retain

retain a ſtrong affection for their luſts, they will break through all conviction, and what evidence ſoever be offered to them, they will find ſome way or other to avoid it, and to delude themſelves. The plain truth of the caſe is this, (if men will honeſtly ſpeak their conſciences, they cannot deny it) they do not call for more evidence, either becauſe they want it, or are willing to be convinced by it; but that they may ſeem to have ſome excuſe for themſelves, for not being convinced by that evidence which is afforded to them.

4thly, Experience does abundantly teſtify, how ineffectual extraordinary ways are to convince and reclaim men of depraved minds, and ſuch as are obſtinately addicted to their luſts. We find many remarkable experiments of this in the hiſtory of the Bible. What wonders were wrought in the ſight of Pharaoh and the Egyptians! yet they were hardened under all theſe plagues. Balaam, who *greedily followed the wages of unrighteouſneſs*, was not to be ſtopped by the admonition of an angel. The Jews, after ſo many miracles which their eyes had ſeen, continued to be a *ſtiff-necked and gain-ſaying people*; ſo that it is hard to ſay which was more prodigious, the wonders which GOD wrought for them, or their rebellions againſt him; and when *in the fulneſs of time*, the SON of GOD came, and did among them *the works which never man did*, ſuch, as one would have thought might have brought the worſt people in the world to repentance, thoſe of Tyre and Sidon, of Sodom and Gomorrah, yet they repented not. Yea, the very thing which the rich man here in my text requeſted of Abraham for his brethren, was done among them; Lazarus did riſe from the dead, and teſtified unto them, and they were not perſuaded.

And which is yet more, our SAVIOUR himſelf, according to his own prediction while he was alive, *roſe again from the dead the third day*, and was viſibly

taken up into heaven; and yet how few among them did *believe, and give glory to* GOD? so that we see the very thing here spoken of in the text, made good in a famous instance; they who *believed not Moses and the prophets*, which testified of the MESSIAS, were *not persuaded when he rose from the dead.*

And does not our own experience tell us, how little effect the extraordinary providences of GOD have had upon those who were not reclaimed by his word? It is not long since GOD shewed himself among us, by *terrible things in righteousness*, and visited us with three of his sorest judgments, war, and pestilence, and fire; and yet how does all manner of wickedness and impiety still reign and rage among us; it is a very sad consideration to see how little those who have outlived the plagues, have been reformed by them; *we have not returned to the* LORD, *nor sought him for all this.*

I may appeal to the experience of particular persons. How frequently do we see men, after great afflictions, and tedious sufferings, and dangerous sicknesses, return to their former evil courses! and though they have been upon the brink of eternity, and *the terrors of death have compassed them about, and the pains of hell have almost taken hold of them*, though they have had as lively and sensible convictions of another world, as if they had spoken with those that had come from thence, or even been there themselves; yet they have taken no warning, but upon their deliverance and recovery, have been as mad, as furious sinners as they were before; so that it ought to be no such wonder to us, which the text tells us, that *if men hear not Moses and the prphets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* Especially, if we consider in the

5th and last place, That an effectual persuasion (that is, such a belief as produceth repentance and a good

good life) is the gift of GOD, and depends upon the operation and concurrence of his grace, which is not to be expected in an extraordinary way, where men have obstinately rejected the ordinary means appointed by GOD for that end. To be effectually persuaded to change our lives, and become new men, is a work not to be done without the assistance of GOD's grace, and there is little reason to expect that GOD will afford his grace to those who reject and despise the counsels of his word. The doctrine of salvation contained in the Holy Scriptures, and the promises and threatenings of GOD's word, are the ordinary means which GOD hath appointed for the conversion of men, and to bring them to repentance; and if we sincerely use these means, we may confidently expect the concurrence of GOD's grace to make them effectual; but if we neglect and resist these means, in confidence that GOD should attempt our recovery by some extraordinary ways: though he should gratify our presumptuous and unreasonable curiosity, so far as to send *one from the dead to testify unto us*: yet we have no reason to expect the assistance of his grace, to make such a conviction effectual to our repentance, when we have so long despised his word, and resisted his SPIRIT, which are *the power of* GOD *unto salvation.*

Without his grace and assistance, the most probable means will prove ineffectual to alter and change our corrupt natures; *by grace we are saved, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of* GOD. This grace is revealed to us in the gospel; and the assistances of it are conveyed to us by the gospel; and it is great presumption to promise to ourselves the assistance of GOD's grace in any other way than he hath been pleased to promise it to us.

And thus I have shewn you, as briefly and plainly as I could, how unlikely it is, that those who obstinately

obſtinately reject a clear and publick revelation of GOD, ſhould be effectually convinced and brought to repentance by any apparitions from the dead.

I ſhall only make two or three inferences from this diſcourſe which I have made, and ſo conclude.

1ſt, Since the Scriptures are the publick and ſtanding revelation of GOD's will to men, and the ordinary means of ſalvation, we may hence conclude, that people ought to have them in ſuch a language as they can underſtand. This our SAVIOUR plainly ſuppoſeth in the diſcourſe which he repreſents between Abraham and the rich man; deſiring that Lazarus might be ſent from the dead *to his brethren, to teſtify unto them*; to which requeſt Abraham would not have given this anſwer and advice, *they have Moſes and the prophets, let them hear them*, had he ſuppoſed that the Scriptures then were, or for the future ought to be, locked up from the people in an unknown tongue; for the rich man might very well have replied, *nay, father Abraham*, but they are not permitted to have *Moſes and the prophets* in ſuch a language as they can underſtand; and therefore there is more need why *one ſhould be ſent from the dead to teſtify unto them.*

Nor would Abraham have ſaid again, *if they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded.* For how ſhould men hear what they cannot underſtand, ſo as to be perſuaded by it?

It is evident then, that our SAVIOUR, according to the reaſoning of this parable, takes it for granted, that the Holy Scriptures are the ſtanding and ordinary means of bringing men to faith and repentance, and that the people are to have the free uſe of them. But ſince our SAVIOUR's time, the Church of Rome hath found a mighty inconvenience in this, and therefore hath taken the Scripture

tures out of the hands of the people. They will not now let them *have Moſes and the prophets*, the goſpel of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, and the writings of his apoſtles, becauſe they are really afraid they ſhould *hear them*, and by hearing of them, be convinced and perſuaded of the errors and corruptions of their Church; but inſtead of the Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, they have put into their hands a legend of famous apparitions of men from the dead, teſtifying unto them" concerning purgatory and tranſubſtantiation, and the worſhip of the bleſſed virgin and the ſaints, and the great benefit and refreſhment which ſouls in purgatory have by the indulgencies of the Pope, and the prayers of the living put up to ſaints and angels on their behalf: ſo that in the Church of Rome, quite contrary to our SAVIOUR's method, men are perſuaded of their religion, of their new articles of faith, and ways of worſhip, not by Moſes and the prophets, not by the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures (for they every where teſtify againſt them) but by abſurd romances, and ill-contrived fictions of apparitions from the dead. I will diſmiſs this matter with this one obſervation, that however intereſted and confident men may ſet a bold face upon any thing, yet it cannot to conſiderate men but ſeem a very hard caſe, that there ſhould be no ſalvation to be had out of the Church of Rome: and yet the ordinary, and (in our SAVIOUR's judgment) the moſt effectual means of ſalvation are not to be had in it.

But I paſs from this, to that which does more immediately concern our practice.

2dly, Let us hear and obey that publick revelation of GOD's will, which in ſo much mercy to mankind, he hath been pleaſed to afford us. This an ineſtimable privilege and advantage which the world in many ages was deſtitute of, having no other guide to conduct them to eternal happineſs but

but the light of nature, and some particular revelations, which now and then GOD was pleased to make of his will to men: but now GOD hath set up a great and standing light in the world, the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures; and by the gospel of his blessed SON, hath *given the knowledge of salvation to all men, for the remission of their sins, through the tender mercies of* GOD, *whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace*, to convince us of the error of our ways, and to direct us in our duty. *We, upon whom the ends of the world are come*, do enjoy all the advantages of divine revelation which the world ever had, and as great as the world ever shall have. GOD *in these last days hath spoken unto us by his* SON, and if we will not hear him, GOD will employ no other extraordinary prophet and messenger to us. *If the wrath of* GOD *so clearly revealed from heaven by the gospel of our blessed* SAVIOUR, *against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*; if the terror of the great day, and the fear of eternal torment; if the dreadful sufferings of the SON of GOD for our sins, and the merciful offers of pardon and reconciliation in his blood, and the glorious hopes of eternal life and happiness will not prevail with us to leave our sin, and to amend our lives, we have no reason to expect that GOD should use any farther means to reclaim us; that he should ever make any more attempts for our recovery. And therefore,

3dly, and lastly, Those who are not brought to repentance, and effectually persuaded by this clear and publick revelation which GOD hath made of his will to men in the Holy Scriptures, have reason to look upon their case as desperate.

Methinks it should not be a desirable thing to any of us to be convinced by an apparition, the thing is so dreadful and full of terror; besides, that it argues men

men to be ſtrangely hardened in a bad courſe, and obſtinately bent upon their evil ways, when nothing will affright them from their ſins, but what will almoſt put them out of their wits; when nothing will keep them from running into hell, but a fearful and ghaſtly meſſenger from thence. What a terrible ſight would it be to any of us, to meet one of our companions, whom we had lately known in this world, freſh come out of thoſe flames, with the ſmell of fire and brimſtone upon him! what imagination can paint to itſelf the dread and horror of ſuch a ſpectacle! the rich man here in the parable, when he was in hell, is repreſented as ſenſible of the inconvenience of this, and therefore he did not deſire to be ſent himſelf to his brethren, but deſired that Lazarus might go and teſtify unto them: he was apprehenſive how frightful a ſight he himſelf muſt needs have been to them, and therefore he deſires that they might have a gentle warning by one, who came out of Abraham's boſom had ſeen the miſeries of the damned, but enjoyed the ſtate of the bleſſed.

But let not us tempt GOD by any ſuch unreaſonable demand, who ſpeaks to us every day by the plain declarations of his word, and hath of late days called ſo loudly upon us by the voice of his providence to repent and turn to him; by ſo many miracles of mercy and deliverance, as GOD hardly ever wrought for any prince and people, and by ſuch terrible vollies of judgments, and full vials of wrath, as have ſeldom been poured out upon any nation. GOD ſpeaks to you by his miniſters, men like your ſelves (GOD knows, poor frail and ſinful men) but we are ſure, that when we call you to repentance, we deliver to you the will and pleaſure, the counſels and commands of the great GOD, which (whatever account may be made of us) do certainly challenge your moſt awful attention and regard. And we are ſenſible that we are called to

a very

a very difficult and unpleasant work, to contend with the lusts and vices of men, to strive against the strong and impetuous streams of a wicked and perverse generation; and nothing in the world could move us to this unwelcome and grievous importunity, but a great and just sense of our own duty, and your danger. And if we will not take these warnings why should we expect that GOD should vouchsafe to send an express messenger to us from the other world, to certify us how all things are there, and that not so much to help the weakness of our faith, as to humour the perverseness of our infidelity? and why should we imagine that this course would prove more effectual? *let us not deceive ourselves*, the same lusts which now detain men so strongly in impenitency and unbelief, would in all probability hurry them on to hell, though an angel from heaven should meet them in their way, to give a stop to them. This indeed might startle us; but nothing is like to save us, if the word of GOD and his grace do not.

But are we in earnest, and would we *be perswaded if one should rise from the dead?* GOD hath condescended thus far to us, there is *one risen from the dead to testify unto us*, JESUS the SON of GOD, who *died for our sins, and rose again for our justification*, and is ascended into heaven, and set down at the right hand of GOD, to assure us of a blessed resurrection and a glorious immortality. And if this will not satisfy us, GOD will gratify our curiosity no farther. If we *will not believe him, whom* GOD *hath sent*, and to convince us that he hath sent him, hath *raised him up from the dead, we shall die in our sins*, and perish in our impenitency. GOD hath in great mercy to mankind done that which is abundantly sufficient to convince those who are of a teachable temper and disposition: but in great wisdom and justice he hath not thought fit to provide any remedy for the wilful obstinacy and intractable perverseness of men.

No

Now GOD, who hath the hearts of all men in his hands, perſuades us all *to break off our ſins by repentance, and to give glory to* GOD, before death and darkneſs come, and the day of our final viſitation overtake us, when we may perhaps be ſurprized by a ſudden ſtroke, or ſeized upon by a violent diſeaſe, and may have no ſenſe and apprehenſion of our approaching danger; or if we have, *may find no place for repentance, though we ſeek it it with tears*; which GOD grant may never happen to be the caſe of any of us, for his mercy's ſake in CHRIST JESUS, to whom with the FATHER, &c.

SERMON CXXIX.

The children of this world wiſer than the children of light.

Preached at Whitehall, anno 1684.

LUKE xvi. 8.

For the children of this world are in their generation wiſer than the children of light.

THESE words are in the parable of the rich man's ſteward, who being called upon to give up his accounts, in order to his being diſcharged from his office, caſt about with himſelf, what courſe he had beſt to take, to provide for his ſubſiſtence, when he ſhould be turned out of his employment. At laſt he reſolves upon this: that he will go to his LORD's debtors, and take a favourable account of them; and inſtead of *a hundred meaſures of oil, write down fifty*, and inſtead of *a hundred meaſures of wheat, write down fourſcore*; that by this means he might oblige them to be kind to him in his neceſſity. The lord hearing of this, commends the unjuſt ſteward, *becauſe he had done wiſely*; that is, he took notice of his diſhoneſty; but praiſed his ſhrewdneſs and ſagacity, as having done prudently for himſelf, though he did not deal juſtly with him; and this is uſual among men. When we ſee a man ingeniouſly bad, to commend his wit, and to ſay it is

is a great pity he doth not use it better, and apply it to good purposes. Upon the whole, our SAVIOUR maks this observation; *that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*; as if he had said, thus did this worldly wise man, thus provident was he for his future security and subsistence. He no sooner understands that he is to be turned out of his office, but he considers what provision to make for himself against that time. And is it not pity, that good men do not apply this wisdom to better and greater purposes? for is not every man such a steward, entrusted by GOD with the blessings of this life, and many opportunities of doing good? for all which, since he must shortly give an account, he ought in all reason so to use them, as thereby to provide for the happiness of another life, against this temporal life have an end.

And this is all the parallel intended in this parable, as we may see by our SAVIOUR's application of it. For parables are not to be stretched to an exact parallel in all the parts and circumstances of them; but only to be applied to the particular point and purpose intended. A parable, and the moral accommodation of it, being (as one well observes) not like two plains, which touch one another in every part; but like a globe upon a plain, which only toucheth in one point. Thus our SAVIOUR separates the wisdom of this steward from his injustice, and proposeth that to our imitation; *the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

The words are a comparison; in which we have

1st, The persons compared, *the children of this world*, and the *children of light*. It is a very usual phrase among the Hebrews, when they would express any thing to partake of such a nature or quality, to call it the son or child of such a thing. Thus good men are called *the children of* GOD, and bad men *the children of the devil*; those who mind earthly things,

and make the things of this world their greateſt aim and deſign, are called *the children of this world*; and thoſe who are better enlightened with the knowledge of their own immortality, and the belief of a future ſtate after this life, are called *the children of light*.

2dly, Here is the thing, wherein they are compared, and that is, as to their wiſdom and prudence.

3dly, The object of this prudence, which is not the ſame in both; as if the ſenſe were, *the children of this world are wiſer than the children of light*, as to the things of this world; but here are two ſeveral objects intended, about which the prudence of theſe two ſorts of perſons is reſpectively exerciſed; the concernments of this world and the other. And our SAVIOUR's meaning is, that *the children of this world are wiſer in their generation*, that is, in their way, viz. as to the intereſts and concernments of this world, *than the children of light* are in theirs, viz. as to the intereſts and concernments of the other world.

4thly, Here is a deciſion of the matter, and which of them it is that excels in point of prudence, in their way; and our SAVIOUR gives it to the *children of this world*; *they are wiſer in their generation, than the children of light*.

Now this propoſition is not to be taken in the utmoſt ſtrictneſs and rigor; as if it were univerſally true, and without any exception; as if no man had ever been ſo wiſe and provident for his ſoul, and the concernments of another world, as worldly men are for the intereſts and concernments of this life. For there are ſome that are fools at large, and imprudent in their whole conduct and management, both as to their affairs of this world, and the other; who are in too ſtrict a ſenſe, *the children of this world*. They mind nothing but this world, and yet are groſsly imprudent, even in their

proſecution

profecution of their temporal intereſts: they neglect and forego all other worldly advantages, for the ſake of a little ſenſual pleaſure; and then they loſe and deſtroy that too, by an over-hot and eager purſuit of it, and turn it at laſt into gall and wormwood. And there are others, (as St Paul for inſtance) who, I doubt not, have been as prudent and zealous, and induſtrious for the promoting of religion, and the ſalvation of themſelves and others, as any man can be about the affairs of this preſent life; and I hope there are ſome ſuch in every age, but GOD knows they are very few, and their wiſdom and induſtry is ſeldom ſo equal, and conſtant, and uniform, as that of *the men of this world.*

So that we are to underſtand this ſaying of our SAVIOUR's with the ſame allowance as we generally do all moral and proverbial ſpeeches, that they are true for the moſt part, and the inſtances and exceptions to the contrary are very rare. It is ſeldom ſeen, that good men are ſo wiſe for the concernments of their ſouls, and of religion, as many worldly men are for their worldly intereſt.

In ſpeaking to this propoſition, I ſhall do theſe three things.

Firſt, Confirm and illuſtrate the truth of it, by conſidering the ſeveral parts and properties of wiſdom.

Secondly, Give ſome probable account of this, by conſidering what advantages *the children of this world have above the children of light.*

Thirdly, I ſhall draw ſome inferences from the whole, by way of application.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to confirm and illuſtrate the truth of this, by conſidering the ſeveral parts and properties of wiſdom. Now this is wiſdom, to mind and regard our chief end, and by all means to promote it; and this regard to our chief end doth expreſs itſelf chiefly in theſe particulars; in our being firmly fixed and reſolved upon it; in chooſing the fitteſt means

for the compaſſing and accompliſhing of it; in a diligent uſe of thoſe means; in an invincible conſtancy and perſeverance in the proſecution of it; and in making all things to ſubmit and to ſtoop to it. Theſe are the principal parts and properties of wiſdom; and I ſhall ſhew, that in all theſe *the children of this world* do uſually excel *the children of light*.

1ſt, They are uſually more firmly fixed and reſolved upon their end. Whatever they ſet up for their end, riches, or honours, or pleaſures, they are fixed upon it, and ſteady in the proſecution of it. If they ſet up for riches or honour, they neglect and deſpiſe pleaſure, if it croſs either of thoſe ends. And this fixed reſolution of the end is the great ſpring of action, and that which inſpires men with vigour and diligence in the uſe of means; and the more reſolved men are upon the end, the more active and induſtrious they will be in the uſe of means; for the end governs the means, and gives law and meaſure to our activity and induſtry in the uſe of them, and ſweetens and allays the trouble and difficulty of them.

So that where the end is once firmly fixed and reſolved upon, there will not be wanting fervour of proſecution; but if we be wavering and unſteady as to our end, this will weaken our hands, and quench the heat of our endeavours, and abate the eagerneſs of our purſuit, and according to the degree of it, will derive a debility and inconſtancy into all our motions. *The double-minded man* (as St James ſays) *is unſtable in all his ways*. Now *the children of this world* are commonly more fixed and reſolved upon their end, than *the children of light*. 'Tis rare to ſee the whole life and actions of a good man, ſo conſtantly and uniformly conſpiring to the furtherance of his great end, ſo directly tending to the ſalvation of his ſoul, and the increaſe of his glory and happineſs in another world; as the actions of a worldly man, and the whole courſe of his life do to the advancing of his worldly

worldly intereſts. The covetous or ambitious men ſeldom do any thing to the beſt of their knowledge, that is impertinent to their end, much leſs contrary to it; through every thing that they do one may plainly ſee the end they aim at, and that they are always true to it: whereas the beſt men do many things, which are plainly croſs and contrary to their end, and a great many more, which have no relation to it; and when they mind it, it is rather by fits and ſtarts, than in any even courſe and tenor of actions.

And of this we have a famous inſtance in that worldly and ſecular church, which now for ſeveral hundred of years hath more ſteadily purſued the end of ſecular greatneſs and dominion, than any other church hath done to the ends of true religion, the glory of GOD, and the ſalvation of the ſouls of men, ſo that there is hardly any doctrine or practice peculiar to that church, and differing from our common Chriſtianity, but it hath a direct and viſible tendency to the promoting of ſome worldly intereſt or other. For inſtance, why do they deny the people the Holy Scriptures and the ſervice of GOD in a language which they can underſtand? but that by keeping them in ignorance, they may have them in more perfect ſlavery and ſubjection to them? why do they forbid their prieſts to marry? but that they may have no intereſt diſtinct from that of their church, and leave all to it when they die? to what end is auricular confeſſion? but to keep people in awe, by the knowledge of their ſecrets? why muſt the laity only receive the ſacrament in one kind, but to draw a greater reverence to the prieſt, whoſe privilege it ſhall be to receive in both? and why is the intention of the prieſt neceſſary to the efficacy of the ſacraments? but to perſuade the people, that notwithſtanding the gracious intention of GOD toward mankind, they cannot be ſaved without the good-will of the prieſt? the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences are a plain device to make their markets

of

of the ſins and ſouls of men. I might inſtance in a hundred things more in that church, which are of the ſame tendency. This St John foretold ſhould be the character of the ſpirit of antichriſt, that it ſhould be a worldly ſpirit, and the doctrines of it ſhould ſerve a ſecular intereſt and deſign, 1 John iv. 5. *They are of the world, and they ſpeak from the world, and the world hears them.* What church is there in the world, ſo true throughout to the intereſt of religion, as this worldly church hath been to it's own ſecular power and greatneſs?

2dly, *The children of this world* are wiſer in the choice of means in order to their end; and this is a great part of wiſdom. For ſome means will bring about an end with leſs pains and difficulty, and expence of time than others. And the men of the world are very ingenious in diſcerning the fitneſs and force of means to their ſeveral ends. To what a certainty have men reduced all the ways and arts of gain, and growing rich, and of riſing to honour and preferment? what long trains will men lay to bring about their deſired end? what ſubtile methods have men deviſed, to inſinuate themſelves into court; and when they are there, to plant themſelves in the eye of their prince, and in the ſun-ſhine of his favour? and then they have as many ways of worming others out, as of ſcrewing themſelves in.

But in the concernments of our ſouls, and the affairs of another world, how dull and injudicious are we? and how aukwardly and untowardly do we apply means to ends, as if men were *only wiſe to do evil, but to do good had no underſtanding*, as the prophet complains? by what incongruous and irregular means do many (who would ſeem to be, and ſometimes perhaps are, very zealous in religion) endeavour (as they think) to promote GOD's glory, by pious frauds and counterfeit miracles, and telling officious lies for GOD? what a compaſs do many men fetch to go to heaven, by innumerable devices of will-worſhip,

ship, by voluntary severities, neither pleasing to GOD, nor profitable to men? by tedious pilgrimages and senseless ceremonies, and innumerable little external observances of no virtue or efficacy in religion? and by wandring through a wilderness of opinions, and the bushes and brakes of unprofitable questions, and controversies? whereas the way to heaven lies plain and straight before us, consisting in simplicity of belief, and in holiness and innocency of life. Not but that there are great differences in the church of Rome, between the secular priests and the regular; between the jansenists and the jesuits: but they still unite in a common interest, and are subject to antichrist their common head. They do not separate from one another, and excommunicate one another, and declare against one another, that they are not of the true church. *Satan never casts out Satan*; and though he loves divisions among Christians, yet he always takes care, that *his own kingdom be not divided against itself*, so as to endanger the ruin of it. And whenever they have any hopeful design for the extirpation of protestants, they can lay aside their enmities, and be reconciled in such a design. Then the pope and the kings of the earth *take counsel together*, and like Herod and Pilate, when CHRIST was to be crucified, can be made friends at a day's warning. Whereas the divisions of the true church are pernicious to it, and, as we see at this day among ourselves, our senseless differences and wild heats on both sides, do contribute to the setting up of popery, and the ruin of the reformed religion; and yet no persuasion, no experience can make us wiser.

3dly, *The children of this world* are commonly more diligent in the use of means for the obtaining of their end; they will sweat and toil, and take any pains, *rise up early, and lie down late, and eat the bread of carefulness*; their thoughts are continually running upon their business, and they catch at every opportunity of promoting it; they will pinch nature and

and haraſs it; and rob themſelves of their reſt, and all the comfort of their lives, to raiſe their fortune and eſtate. What drudges were Cæſar and Alexander in the way of fame and ambition? how did they tire themſelves and others with long and tedious marches? to what inconveniences and dangers did they expoſe themſelves and thouſands more? what havock and deſtruction did they make in the world, that they might gain to themſelves the empty title of conquerors of it? when the men of the world engage in any deſign, how intent are they upon it, and with what vigour do they proſecute it? they do not counterfeit a diligence, and ſeem to be more ſerious and induſtrious than in truth they are; they are rather hypocrites the other way, and would conceal their covetouſneſs and ambition, and not ſeem to aſpire after riches and honours ſo much as indeed they do.

But in the purſuit of better things, how cold and remiſs are we? with what a careleſs indifference do moſt men mind their ſouls? how negligent and formal, and many times hypocritical are they in the ſervice of of GOD, and the exerciſe of religion? with what a pitiful courage, and with what faint ſpirits do they reſiſt ſin, and encounter the temptations of it? and how often, and how eaſily are they foiled and baffled by them.

4thly, The men of the world are more invincibly conſtant and pertinacious in the purſuit of earthly things; they are not to be bribed or taken off by favour or fair words; not to be daunted by difficulties, or daſhed out of countenance by the frowns and reproaches of men. Offer an ambitious man any thing ſhort of his end and aim, to take him off from the proſecution of it; he ſcorns the motion, and thinks you go about to fool him out of his intereſt. Bait a covetous man with temptations of pleaſure, to get his money from him; how generouſly will this mean-

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ſpirited man trample upon pleaſure, when it would tempt him from his deſign of being rich?

Difficulties do not daunt them, but whet their courage, and quicken their endeavours, and ſet a keener edge upon their ſpirits. Give an ambitious man almoſt a demonſtration of the impoſſibility of his attempts; *contra audentior ibit*, he will go on ſo much the more boldly and reſolutely. In the ways of religion men are apt to be diſcouraged and put out of countenance, by contempt and reproach; but a covetous man is not to be jeered and flurted out of his money and eſtate; he can be content to be rich, and give leave to thoſe that are not ſo, to laugh at him.

Populus mihi ſibilat, at mihi plaudo.

The rich worldling can hug himſelf and his bags, when the world hiſſeth at him; he can bear *to be hated, and perſecuted, and have all manner of evil ſpoke againſt him for money ſake:* and in the purſuits of theſe deſigns men will, with great reſolution, encounter enmity and oppoſition, and endure great ſufferings and perſecution. How many have been martyrs to their luſts, and have ſacrificed their eaſe and health, and even their lives, in the proſecution of their ambitious, and covetous, and voluptuous deſigns?

But, on the other hand, how eaſily are men checked and diverted from a good courſe, by the temptations and advantages of this world; how many are cold in their zeal for religion, by the favour and friendſhip of this world? and as their goods and eſtates have grown greater, their devotion hath grown leſs. How apt are they to be terrified at the apprehenſion of danger and ſufferings; and, by their fearful imaginations, to make them greater than they are, and with the people of Iſrael to be diſheartened from all farther attempts of entering *into the land of promiſe*, becauſe

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it is *full of giants and the ſons of Anak?* How eaſily was Peter frighted into the denial of his maſter? and when our SAVIOUR was apprehended, how did his diſciples forſake him, and fly from him? and tho' they were conſtant afterwards to the death, yet it was a great while before they were perfectly armed and ſteeled againſt the fear of ſuffering.

5thly, The men of the world will make all things ſtoop and ſubmit to that which is their great end and deſign; their end rules them and governs them, and gives laws to all their actions; they will make an advantage of every thing, and if it will not ſerve their end one way or other, they will have nothing to do with it. If an ambitious man ſeek wealth, it is but in order to his deſign to purchaſe friends, and ſtrengthen his intereſt, and to make his riſing the eaſier; he will lay his whole eſtate at the ſtake, rather than miſs of his end. The covetous man will quit his pleaſure, when it lies croſs to his intereſt, if he have any expenſive luſt and chargeable vice, he will turn it off, or exchange it for ſome more frugal and profitable ſin.

But in the affairs of religion, and the concernments of our ſouls, how frequently do men act without a due regard and conſideration of their great end? and inſtead of making other things ſubmit to it, they often bow and bend it to their inferior intereſt. They make heaven ſtoop to earth, and religion to ſerve a worldly deſign; and the glory of GOD to give way to gain, and the great concernments of their ſouls, and their eternal ſalvation, to their temporal profit and advantage. The men of the world are generally true to their great end, and pay it that reſpect which is due to it, and will ſuffer nothing to take place of it in their eſteem and affection; and if men were as wiſe for their ſouls, and for another world, they would bring all things to their great end, and make all the concernments of this temporal life to yield and give way

way to the great concernments of their eternal happiness. I proceed in the

Second place to give some account of this, whence it comes to pass, that *the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.* And this I shall do by considering what advantages *the children of this world* have, as to the affairs of this world, above what good men have, as to the concernments of another world. I shall instance in four or five of the chief.

1st, The things of this world are present and sensible, and because of their nearness to us, are apt to strike powerfully upon our senses, and to affect mightily to excite our desires after them, and to work strongly upon our hopes and fears: but the things of another world being remote from us, are lessened by their distance, and consequently are not apt to work so powerfully upon our minds. They are invisible to us, and only discerned by faith, which is a more obscure and less certain perception of things, than we have of those objects which are presented to our bodily eyes. *The things which* GOD *hath prepared for them that love him,* the glory and happiness of the next world, are *things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. The children of light* do not see GOD, as *the children of this world* see mammon.

2dly, The sensual delights and enjoyments of this world are better suited, and more agreeable to the corrupt and degenerate nature of men, than spiritual and heavenly things are to those that are regenerate. In this lapsed and degenerate state of mankind, appetite and sense are apt to prevail above reason; and therefore those things which are most delightful to sense, we favour and mind, and love to busy ourselves about them, because they are most suitable to the animal life, which is the governing principle of corrupt nature.

And the reason of this is plain, because that principle in worldly and sensual men, which pursues

earthly things, is in thoſe who are unregenerate entire and undivided, and conſequently the affections and inclinations of the whole man do all tend one way, and run out towards thoſe things in a full and undivided ſtream; whereas good men are but regenerate in part, and tho' they have a principle of ſpiritual life in them; yet their affections are divided, and there is a great ſtruggling and conflict between fleſh and ſpirit, and it is a great while before the ſpiritual principle doth clearly prevail, and get a perfect victory over our ſenſual appetites and inclinations. Men's affections to the world are entire and unbroken, and therefore they purſue theſe things with all their might: but the beſt men are but good in part; and that heavenly principle which is in them, is very much hindred in it's operations by a contrary principle, our earthly and ſenſual inclinations, which are hardly ever perfectly ſubdued and brought under in this world.

3dly, The worldly man's faith and hope, and fear of preſent and ſenſible things, is commonly ſtronger than a good man's faith, and hope, and fear of things future and eternal. Now faith, and hope, and fear, are the great principles which govern and bear ſway in the actions and lives of men. If a man be once firmly perſuaded of the reality of a thing, and that it is good for him, and poſſeſſed with good hopes of obtaining it, and great fears and apprehenſions of the danger of miſſing it, this man may almoſt be put upon any thing. The merchant trafficks, and the huſbandman plows and ſows in faith and hope, becauſe he is convinced that bread is neceſſary to the ſupport of life, and hopes that GOD will ſo bleſs his labours, that he ſhall reap the fruit of them, and plainly ſees, that if he do not take this pains, he muſt ſtarve. But how few are there that believe, and hope, and fear concerning the things of another world, as *the children of this world* do concerning the things of this world? if any man aſk me, how I know

know this? I appeal to experience; it is plain and visible in the lives, and actions, and endeavours of men. Good men are seldom so effectually and thoroughly persuaded of the principles of religion, and the truth of the sayings contained in the Holy Scriptures, as the men of the world are of their own sayings and proverbs. Men do not believe that *honesty is the best policy*, or as Solomon expresseth it, that *he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely*; as the men of the world believe their own maxims, that *a man may be too honest to live*; that *plain-dealing is a jewel, but he that wears it shall die a beggar*. Few men's hopes of heaven are so powerful and vigorous, and have so sensible an effect upon their lives, as the worldly man's hopes of gain and advantage. Men are not so afraid to swear, as they are to speak treason; they are not so firmly persuaded of the danger of sin to their souls and bodies in another world, as of the danger to which some crimes against the laws of men do expose their temporal lives and safety; therefore they will many times venture to offend God, rather than incur the penalty of human laws.

4thly, The men of the world have but one design, and are wholly intent upon it, and this is a great advantage. He that hath but one thing to mind, may easily be skilled and excel in it. When a man makes one thing his whole business, no wonder if he be very knowing and wise in that. Now the men of the world mind worldly things, and have no care and concernment for any thing else. It is a saying, I think, of Thomas Aquinas, *cave ab illo qui unicum legit librum: he is a dangerous man that reads but one book*; he that gives his mind but to one thing, must needs be too hard for any man at that. Application to one thing, especially in matters of practice, gains a man perfect experience in it, and experience furnisheth him with observations about it, and these make him wise and prudent in that thing.

But good men, tho' they have a great affection for heaven and heavenly things, yet the buſineſs and neceſſities of this life, do very much divert and take them off from the care of better things; they are divided between the concernments of this life and the other; and tho' there be but *one thing neceſſary* in compariſon, yet the conveniencies of this life are to be regarded; and tho' our ſouls be our main care, yet ſome conſideration muſt be had of our bodies, that they may be fit for the ſervice of our ſouls; ſome proviſion muſt be made for their preſent ſupport, ſo long as we continue in theſe earthly tabernacles; and this will neceſſarily engage us in the world, ſo that we cannot always and wholly apply ourſelves to heavenly things, and mind them as the men of the world do the things of this world.

5thly and laſtly, The men of the world have a greater compaſs and liberty in the purſuit of their worldly deſigns, than good men have in the proſecution of their intereſt. The *children of light* are limited and confined to the uſe of lawful means, for the compaſſing of their ends; but the men of the world are not ſo ſtrait-laced, *quocunque modo rem*, they are reſolved upon the point, and will ſtick at no means to compaſs their end. They do not ſtand upon the nice diſtinctions of good and evil, of right and wrong, invented by ſpeculative and ſcrupulous men, to puzzle buſineſs, and to hinder and diſappoint great deſigns. If Ahab have a mind to Naboth's vineyard, and Naboth will not let him be honeſt, and have it for a valuable conſideration, he will try to get it a cheaper way: Naboth ſhall by falſe witneſs be made a traitor, and his vineyard by this means ſhall be forfeited to him. And thus the unjuſt ſteward in the parable provided for himſelf; he wronged his lord, to ſecure a retreat to himſelf in the time of his diſtreſs.

The third and laſt thing only remains, to make ſome inferences from what hath been ſaid by way of application. And,

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1ſt, Notwithſtanding the commendation which hath been given of the wiſdom of this world, yet upon the whole matter it is not much to be valued and admired. It is indeed great in it's way and kind; but it is applied to little and low purpoſes, employed about the concernments of a ſhort time and a few days, about the worſt and meaneſt part of ourſelves, and accompanied with the neglect of greater and better things, ſuch as concern our ſouls, and our whole duration, even our happineſs to all eternity. And therefore that which the world admires and cries up for wiſdom, is in the eſteem of GOD, who judgeth of things according to truth, but vanity and folly. *The wiſdom of the world,* (ſaith St Paul) *is fooliſhneſs with* GOD. The rich man in the parable, who increaſed his goods, and enlarged his barns, and laid up for many years, did applaud himſelf, and was no doubt applauded by others for a very wiſe man: but becauſe *he laid up treaſure for himſelf, and was not rich toward* GOD, that is, did not employ his eſtate to good and charitable purpoſes, therefore GOD, who calls no body out of his right name, calls this man *fool*; *thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be taken from thee, and then whoſe ſhall all theſe things be?* And our SAVIOUR here in the text, while he commends the *wiſdom of the children of the world,* he adds that which is a conſiderable blemiſh and abatement to it, *the children of this world are wiſer,* εἰς τὴν γενεὰν τῶν ἑαυτῶν, *for their age,* for the concernments of this preſent life; but this is but a ſhort and purblind wiſdom, which ſees but a little way, and conſiders only things preſent and near at hand; whereas true wiſdom hath a larger and farther proſpect, and regards the future as well as the preſent, and takes care to provide for it. Nay, our SAVIOUR gives the wiſdom of this world it's utmoſt due, when he ſays, *the children of this world are wiſer for their generation*; for this is the very beſt that can be ſaid of it, it ſeldom looks ſo far, and holds out ſo long. Many men have ſurvived their own projects, and have lived to ſee the folly and ill fate of their covetous and ambitious

designs. So the prophet tells us, *Jer.* xvii. 11. *As the partridge ſitteth on eggs and hatcheth them not; ſo he that getteth riches, and not by right, ſhall leave them in the midſt of his days, and at his end ſhall be a fool.*

This is wiſdom, to regard our main intereſt; but if we be wrong in our end, (as all worldly men are) the faſter and farther we go, the more fatal is our error and miſtake. *The children of this world* are out in their end, and miſtaken in the main; they are wiſe for this world, which is inconſiderable to eternity; wiſe for a little while, and fools for ever.

2dly, From what hath been ſaid, we may infer, that if we loſe our ſouls, and come ſhort of eternal happineſs, it is through our own fault and groſs neglect; for we ſee that men are wiſe enough for this world; and the ſame prudence, and care, and diligence applied to the concernments of our ſouls, would infallibly make us happy. Nay, our SAVIOUR here in the text tells us, that uſually leſs wiſdom and induſtry, than the men of this world uſe about the things of this world, is exerciſed by *the children of light*, who yet at laſt, through the mercy of GOD, do attain eternal life.

So that it is very plain, that if men would but take that care for their immortal ſouls, which they generally do for their frail and dying bodies, and be as heartily concerned for the unſeen world, and for eternity, as they are for things viſible and temporal, they would with much more certainty gain heaven, than any man can obtain worldly riches and honours. And can we in conſcience deſire more, than to be happy for ever, upon as eaſy and upon more certain terms, than any man can be rich or great in this world? for we may miſs of theſe things after all our travel and pains about them; or if we get them, we may loſe them again: but if we *ſeek the kingdom of* GOD, *and his righteouſneſs*; if we be ſincerely good we are ſure to have the reward of it, even that *eternal life, which* GOD, *that cannot lie, hath promiſed*; if we *lay up for ourſelves treaſures in heaven*, they will be ſafe and ſecure

cure there, where *no moth can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.*

If we would seriously think of the other world, and were thoroughly possessed with a firm belief of the eternity of that happiness or misery, which remains for men after this life, we should pray to GOD and hear his word, and perform all the duties of religion, with the same care and concernment, with the same fervour and intention of mind, as men prosecute their worldly businesses. Were we fully persuaded of the unseen glories and torments of the other world, we should be much more affected with them, than with all the temptations and terrors of sense; because in reason they are much more considerable. The disgrace of the pillory will fright men from perjury; and will not everlasting shame and confusion? the fear of death will deter many men from robbing and stealing, who would perhaps venture upon these crimes, if there were no danger in them; and will not the horrors of the *second death, of the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched,* have as great an awe and influence upon us? If they have not, it is a sign, that we do not equally believe the danger of human laws, and the damnation of hell.

Surely men have not the same belief of heaven and affection for it, that they have for this world. If they had, their care and diligence about these things would be more equal. For we are not so weak as we make ourselves; we are not yet so degenerate, but if we would set ourselves seriously to it, and earnestly beg the assistance of GOD's grace, we might come to know our duty, and our wills might be engaged to follow the directions of our understandings, and our affections to obey the command of our wills, and our actions to follow the impulse of our affections. Much of this is naturally in our power; and what is wanting, the grace of GOD is ready to supply. We can go to the church, and we can hear the word of GOD, and we can consider what we hear, we can pray to GOD, and say, *we believe,* LORD *help our unbelief,* and enable us to do what thou requirest of us;

and

and we can forbear a great many ſins, which we raſhly and wilfully run into; a great preſent danger will fright from us ſin, a terrible ſtorm will drive us to our devotion, and teach us to pray; a ſharp fit of the gout will take a man off from drinking; the eye of a maſter or magiſtrate will reſtrain men from many things, which they ſay they cannot forbear. So that we do but counterfeit, and make ourſelves more cripples than we are, that we may be pitied; for if fear will reſtrain us, it is a ſign that we can forbear; if *the rod of affliction will fetch it out* of us, and make us do that, which at other times we ſay we are unable to do, this is a demonſtration that it is in us, and that the thing is in our power.

It is true, we can do nothing that is good without the aſſiſtance of GOD's grace: but that aſſiſtance which we may have for the aſking, is in effect in our own power. So that if the matter were ſearched to the bottom, it is not want of power that hinders us from doing our duty, but ſloth and negligence; for GOD hath *given us exceeding great and precious promiſes, whereby we may be made partakers of a divine nature*; and by virtue whereof, if we be not wanting to ourſelves, we may *cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and perfect holineſs in the fear of* GOD.

3dly and laſtly, What a ſhame and reproach is this to *the children of light!* Our SAVIOUR ſpeaks this by way of upbraiding, as we may judge by the terms of compariſon which he uſeth, that *the children of this world ſhould be wiſer than the children of light*, that is, than *wiſdom's own children*; and that they ſhould be *wiſer in their generation*, that is, for the concernments of a ſhort and inconſiderable time, than the others are for all eternity.

How ſhould it make our blood to riſe in our faces, and fill us with confuſion, that the men of this world ſhould be more prudent and ſkilful in the contrivance and management of their little affairs, more reſolute and vigorous in the proſecution of them; than we are about

about the everlasting concernments of our souls! that a worldly church should use wiser and more effectual means to promote and uphold ignorance, and error, and superstition; than we do to build up the true church of CHRIST in knowledge, and faith, and charity! that the men of the world should toil, and take more pains for *the deceitful riches* than we do for *the true*; and be contented to hazard more for *a corruptible crown*, than we for *an incorruptible!* that they should love pleasure more, than we do GOD, and mind their bodies and temporal estates more, than we do our souls and our eternal happiness!

Do but observe the men of the world, what a pace they go, what large and nimble steps they take in the pursuit of earthly things; they do not seek riches *as if they sought them not*, and love the world, *as if they loved it not*, and enjoy the present delights of this this world, *as if they possessed them not*; tho' *the fashion of this world passeth away:* but we seek heaven *as if we sought it not*, and love GOD *as if we loved him not*, and mind eternity and the world to come, *as if we minded them not*; and yet *the fashion of that world doth not pass away.*

But to all this it may be said, you have already told us, that *the children of this world* have so many advantages above *the children of light*, that it is no wonder if they excel and outstrip them; and it is very true, that in many respects they have the advantage of them. But if *the children of light* would look about them, and take all things into consideration, they might see something very considerable to balance the advantages on the other side. It is true, the things of this world are present and sensible: but so long as we have sufficient assurance of the reality of a future state, and of the rewards and punishments of it, the greatness and eternity of these is such an amazing consideration, that no distance can render them inconsiderable to a prudent and thinking man. And tho' the men of the world have an entire principle, which is not divided between GOD

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and the world; whereas in good men there is a great conflict of contrary principles, the flesh and spirit: yet this disadvantage is likewise balanced by that powerful assistance of GOD's grace, which is promised to all good men, who heartily beg it of him, and are sincerely resolved to make use of it. And lastly, tho' the men of the world have many ways to compass their ends; yet *the children of light* have one great and infallible one. All the means which the men of the world use to accomplish their designs, may fail and miscarry; for *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but time and chance happen to all:* but he that sincerely serves GOD, and useth the means for the attaining of everlasting salvation, is sure to attain it; if we *seek the righteousness of* GOD as we ought, we shall certainly be admitted into his kingdom. And this surely is an unspeakable advantage, which *the children of light* have above *the children of this world*, that if we faithfully use the means, we cannot fail of the end; *if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life*; which GOD of his infinite goodness grant to us all for his mercies sake.

SERMON

SERMON CXXX.

Concerning the perfection of GOD.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

MATTH. v. 48.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your FATHER *which is in heaven is perfect.*

THESE words are the concluſion which our SAVIOUR draws from thoſe precepts of greater perfection, than any laws that were extant in the world before, ver. 44. *I ſay unto you, love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for thoſe that deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you.* And to perſuade them hereto, he propounds to them the pattern of the divine perfection; telling them, that being thus affected towards their enemies, they ſhould reſemble GOD, ver. 45. *That ye may be the children of your heavenly* FATHER; *for he maketh the ſun to riſe on the evil, and on the good; and ſendeth rain on the juſt, and on the unjuſt.*

And then he tells us, that if we be not thus affected towards our enemies, and thoſe that have been injurious to us, we are ſo far from being like GOD, that we are but juſt level with the worſt of men, ver. 46, 47. *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have you, do not even the publicans the ſame?* and if ye ſalute *your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even*

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the publicans so? And then concludes, that if we would attain that perfection which the Christian religion designs to advance men to, we must endeavour to be like GOD in these perfections of goodness and mercy, and patience; *be ye therefore perfect, as your* FATHER *which is in heaven is perfect.* In which words we have,

First, The absolute perfection of the divine nature supposed; *as your* FATHER *which is in heaven is perfect.*

Secondly, It is propounded as a pattern to our imitation. *Be ye therefore perfect,* &c.

In handling of these words I shall do these four things.

I. Consider how we are to conceive of the *divine perfection.*

II. I shall lay down some rules whereby we may govern and rectify our opinions concerning the attributes and perfections of GOD.

III. How far we are to imitate the perfections of GOD, and particularly what those divine qualities are, which our SAVIOUR doth here more especially propound to our imitation.

IV. I shall endeavour to clear the true meaning of this precept, and to shew that the duty here intended by our SAVIOUR is not impossible to us; and then conclude this discourse with some useful inferences from the whole.

I. I shall consider how we are to conceive of the *divine perfections:* these two ways,

1. By ascribing all imaginable and possible perfection to GOD.

2. By separating and removing all manner of imperfection from him.

1. By ascribing all imaginable and possible perfection to GOD; absolute and universal perfection, not limited to a certain kind, or to certain particulars; but whatever we can conceive and imagine to be a perfec-

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tion, is to be ascribed to him; yea, and beyond this, whatever possible perfection there is, or possible degree of any perfection, which our short understandings cannot conceive or comprehend, is to be ascribed to him. For we are not to confine the perfection of GOD to our imagination, as *if we could find out the Almighty to perfection*: but, on the contrary, to believe the perfection of the divine nature to be boundless and unlimited, and infinitely to exceed our highest thoughts and apprehensions.

More particularly, all kinds and degrees of perfection are to be ascribed to GOD, which either do not imply a plain contradiction, or do not argue some imperfection, or are not evidently inconsistent with some other and greater perfection.

Some things may seem to be perfections, which in truth are not, because they are plainly impossible, and involve a contradiction, as that what has once been, should by any power be made not to have been; or that any thing, which by it's nature is limited and confined to one place, should at the same time be in another. These things in reason are impossible, and therefore not to be supposed to fall under any power how unlimited soever. For if we once ascribe contradictions to GOD, we destroy his being; because then to be, and not to be, power, and no power, would be all one.

And then there are some perfections which do argue and suppose imperfections in them; as motion, the quickness and swiftness whereof in creatures is a perfection, but then it supposeth a finite and limited nature: for a boundless and immense being, that is every where present at once, hath no need to move from one place to another; and therefore, though motion be a perfection in creatures, there is no reason to ascribe it to GOD, because it supposeth a greater imperfection.

And there are also some imaginable degrees of perfection, which, because they are inconsistent with other perfections, are not to be admitted in the divine

nature. For inſtance, ſuch degrees of goodneſs and mercy may be imagined, as would quite exclude and ſhut out juſtice; and on the other hand, ſuch a ſtrictneſs and rigour of juſtice, as would leave no room at all for patience and mercy: and therefore ſuch degrees are not really to be eſteemed perfections. For this is a certain truth, that nothing is a divine perfection, which evidently claſheth with any other neceſſary and eſſential perfection of the divine nature. We muſt ſo conſider the perfections of God, that they may accord and conſiſt together; and therefore it cannot be a perfection of God to be ſo good and gracious as to encourage ſin, and to overthrow the reverence of his own laws and government. 'Tis not goodneſs, but eaſineſs and weakneſs, to be contented to be perpetually injured and affronted. 'Tis not patience to be willing to be everlaſtingly trampled upon. So likewiſe on the other hand, 'tis not a perfection to be ſo ſevere and rigorous, as to ſmite a ſinner in the inſtant that he offends, not to be able to refrain from puniſhment, and to give time for repentance.

But whatever perfection is conceivable or poſſible, and argues no imperfection, nor is repugnant to any other neceſſary perfection, is to be aſcribed to God; for this is the moſt natural and eaſy conception that we can have of God, that he is the moſt perfect being. This natural light doth firſt ſuggeſt and offer to the minds of men, and we cannot conceive of God as meer power and will, without wiſdom and goodneſs. Hence it is that the Greeks call God very often, τὸ κρειττὸν, "the beſt of beings," and the Latin, *optimus maximus*, "the beſt and the greateſt," *beatiſſima & perfectiſſima natura, conſtans & perfecta ratio*, "the happieſt and moſt perfect nature, immutable and abſolute reaſon:" and many other ſuch expreſſions which we meet with in the writings of the heathen philoſophers. I readily grant, that the firſt and moſt obvious thought which

which men have of GOD, is that of his greatneſs and majeſty; but this neceſſarily involves or infers his goodneſs; as Seneca excellently reaſons, *primus deorum cultus eſt deos credere, dein reddere illis majeſtatem ſuam, reddere bonitatem, ſine quâ nulla majeſtas,* "the firſt worſhip of the gods, is to believe their "being; next to aſcribe to them greatneſs and maje-"ſty, to aſcribe to them goodneſs, without which "there can be no majeſty."

And we ſhall find all along in Plato and Tully, and the beſt and wiſeſt writers among the heathens, that they every where attribute the higheſt excellencies and perfections to the divine nature, and do ſteer and govern all their diſcourſes of GOD by this principle, that perfection is to be aſcribed to him: and whenever any thing is ſaid of GOD, they examine whether it be a perfection or not; if it be, they give it him as his due: if it be not, they lay it aſide as a thing not fit to be ſpoken of him.

And in the Scripture we do every where find perfection aſcribed to the nature and works and laws of GOD, to every thing that belongs to him, or proceeds from him. Job xxxvii. 16. *Doſt thou know the wondrous works of him that is perfect in knowledge?* And again, *Canſt thou by ſearching find out* GOD? *canſt thou find out the Almighty to perfection?* Pſal. xviii. 30. *As for* GOD *his way is perfect.* Pſal. xix. 7. *The law of the* LORD *is perfect.*

I ſhall not need to conſider particularly the ſeveral perfections of the divine nature; I ſhall only give you a brief ſcheme and draught of them. Whatever perfection can be imagined either in the manner of being or acting, is to be aſcribed to GOD; therefore, as to his nature, we ſay that he is a ſpirit, that is, that he is not meer body or matter, becauſe that would exclude ſeveral other

perfections: for meer matter is incapable both of knowledge and liberty, being determined by neceſſary laws and motions; and yet without knowledge and liberty, there can be no wiſdom nor goodneſs. We ſay of GOD, that he is of himſelf, and without cauſe, and does not owe his being to any other: and conſequently that he is neceſſarily, and that he cannot but be, and cannot be otherwiſe than he is; for that which is of itſelf, did not chooſe whether it would be or not, nor whether it would be thus or otherwiſe; for to ſuppoſe any thing to deliberate or conſult about it's own being, is to ſuppoſe it to be before it is.

We muſt ſay of GOD likewiſe, that he is immenſe, and every where preſent, becauſe to be limited is an imperfection; and that he is eternal, that is, ever was, and ſhall be; for to ceaſe to be, is a greater imperfection than ſome time not to have been.

And then we are to ſay of GOD, that he is the cauſe of all other beings; that they are made by him, and depend upon him; that he knows all things, and can do all things in the moſt perfect manner, by a glance of his mind, and by the meer beck and nod of his will, without long ſtudy or deliberation, without laborious pains and endeavours, and conſequently that nothing is exempted from his knowledge and power, and providence, and that he adminiſters all things in a way of goodneſs and wiſdom, of juſtice and truth; and therefore all things are to be referred to him, as their laſt end. All theſe perfections, and all other that are poſſible, we are to look upon the divine nature as fully and immutably poſſeſſed of, and that in an higher and more excellent degree than our finite underſtandings are able to conceive or comprehend.

2. As we are to aſcribe all imaginable poſſible perfections to GOD, ſo we are to ſeparate and remove all manner of imperfection from him. We muſt

must not obſcure or blemiſh the divine nature with the leaſt ſhadow or blot of imperfection. If we once admit of this, to aſcribe any thing to GOD which argues imperfection, we ſtrike at the foundation, and deſtroy one of the cleareſt and moſt eſſential notions which men have of GOD. And therefore we find the Scripture very careful to remove all kinds of natural or moral imperfection from GOD. Gen. xviii. 25. *That be far from thee to do after this manner, to ſlay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous ſhould be as the wicked, that be far from thee; ſhall not the judge of all the world do right?* Deut. xxxii. 4. *A* GOD *of truth, and without iniquity.* Rom. ix. 14. *What ſhall we ſay then, is there unrighteouſneſs with* GOD? GOD *forbid*, far be it from him.

Hence it is, that in Scripture holineſs is ſo frequently aſcribed to GOD, which ſignifies the purity and freedom of the divine nature from that which we call ſin; and GOD is very ſollicitous to give us ſuch a notion of himſelf, as may remove ſin and unrighteouſneſs at the greateſt diſtance from him, becauſe that is the greateſt of imperfections. Is it an imperfection to countenance ſin? the Scripture acquits GOD of it, Pſal. v. 4, 5. *Thou art not a* GOD *that hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall evil dwell with thee.* Is it an imperfection to go from one's word, or to change one's mind? this likewiſe is removed from GOD, 1 Sam. xv. 29. *The ſtrength of Iſrael will not lye or repent: he is not a man, that he ſhould repent.* Is it an imperfection to want any thing, to be liable to any thing, to depend upon any thing without ones ſelf for happineſs? this alſo is to be ſet far from him. Job xxii. 2, 3. *Can a man be profitable to* GOD? *or is it a gain to him, that thou makeſt thy way perfect?* Job xxxv. 6, 7. *If thou ſinneſt, what doſt thou againſt him? or if thy tranſgreſſions be multiplied, what doſt*

thou unto him? if thou art righteous, what giveſt thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? thy wickedneſs may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteouſneſs may profit the ſon of man. Is it an imperfection to tempt, or to be tempted to ſin? this is to be ſeparated from GOD, *he cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man*, ſaith St James, chap. i. 17. And to mention no more, is it an imperfection to be in any reſpect mutable? this is denied of GOD. *With him there is no variableneſs, or ſhadow of turning.* Thus you ſee how we are to conceive of the perfections of GOD, by aſcribing all imaginable and poſſible perfections to him, and removing all ſhadow of imperfection from him. I proceed in the

IId place, To lay down ſome rules by which we may rectify and govern our opinions concerning the attributes and perfections of GOD: the beſt I can think of, are theſe following:

Firſt, Let us begin with the moſt natural, and plain, and eaſy perfections of GOD, and lay them for a foundation, and rectify all our other apprehenſions of GOD, and reaſonings about him, by theſe; and theſe are his power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, to which moſt of the reſt may be reduced. Right apprehenſions, and a firm belief of theſe, will make it eaſily credible to us, that all things were made and are governed by him; for his goodneſs will diſpoſe and incline him to communicate being to other things, and to take care of them when they are made. And infinite power and wiſdom render him able to do all this without any labour or difficulty, and without any diſturbance of his eaſe or happineſs, as Epicurus would ſeem vainly to fear; who in truth did not believe a GOD, but pretended only to deny his providence, and that he either made or governed the world, becauſe he was loth to lay ſo much trouble upon him. Vain man!

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as if those things which are impossible and difficult to our weakness and folly, might not be infinitely easy to infinite power and wisdom.

Particularly the goodness and justice of God are not so difficult to apprehend, as the disputes and controversies about them have rendered them to many. When we consider infinite knowledge and power, we may easily lose ourselves, and go out of our depth, by wading too far into them: there is something concerning these, that is unimaginable, and unaccountable to our reason; we may not be able to understand how something may be produced from nothing, because it argues such an excess of power, as we cannot comprehend; but yet we are forced to acknowledge, that either the world must be produced from nothing, or that matter was eternally of itself, which is every whit as hard to imagine, as that infinite power should be able to produce it from nothing. So likewise we are not able to conceive, how God can certainly know future events, which depend upon voluntary and uncertain causes, because we cannot comprehend infinite knowledge; but this we may easily be satisfied in, that infinite power and knowledge may be able to do, and know many things, which we cannot conceive how they can be known or done, no more than a child can imagine how a great mathematician can demonstrate his propositions. Only this we are sure of, as we can be of any thing, that no power can do that which is evidently impossible, and implies a plain contradiction.

We are not able perhaps to reconcile the particular providences of God with his universal goodness, justice, and wisdom, because we cannot see to the end of his ways and works at one view, and see every part with relation to the whole; which would appear very wise, if we knew the whole series of things, and saw the entire design together, as God himself

himſelf does, to whom (as Solomon tells us) *all his ways are known from the beginning.*

So that however we may be at a loſs in our conceptions of GOD's infinite knowledge and power, yet goodneſs, and juſtice, and truth, are notions eaſy and familiar; and if we could not underſtand theſe, the whole Bible would be inſignificant to us. For all revelation from GOD ſuppoſeth us to know what is meant by goodneſs, juſtice, and truth: and therefore no man can entertain any notion of GOD, which plainly contradicts theſe. And it is fooliſh for any man to pretend, that he cannot know what goodneſs and juſtice, and truth in GOD are: for if we do not know this, 'tis all one to us, whether GOD be good or not, nor could we imitate his goodneſs; for he that imitates, endeavours to make himſelf like ſomething that he knows, and muſt of neceſſity have ſome idea of that to which he aims to be like; ſo that if we had no certain and ſettled notion of the goodneſs and juſtice, and truth of GOD, he would be altogether an unintelligible being; and religion, which conſiſts in the imitation of him, would be utterly impoſſible.

Now theſe being the moſt eaſy and intelligible perfections of GOD, by which he is ſaid in Scripture to declare his name, that is, to make himſelf known to us, we ſhould govern all our reaſonings about GOD (as concerning his decrees, and his concurrence with the free actions of men, and his particular providence, which are things more dark and obſcure) by what is more clear; and we ſhall find in Scripture, that in all theſe points holy men do conſtantly appeal to theſe unqueſtionable and intelligible perfections of GOD. *Wilt thou deſtroy the righteous with the wicked?* (ſaith Abraham) *that be far from thee. Shall not the judge of all the world do right?* We may be miſtaken; but GOD certainly knows who are wicked, and who are righteous;

righteous; and he knows how to punish the wicked, and save the righteous: but we cannot be mistaken in this principle, *that the judge of all the world will do right.* Thus Moses satisfies himself and others, concerning the particular providences of GOD towards the people of Israel. Deut. xxxii. 3, 4. *I will publish the name of the* LORD: *all his ways are judgment; a* GOD *of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.* This we certainly know of GOD. So St Paul, Rom. ii. 2. *Thou art inexcusable, O man!* Whatsoever excuse men may pretend for their faults, he lays down this for a principle, *we are sure the judgment of* GOD *is according to truth.*

Secondly, Let us always consider the perfections of GOD in conjunction, and so as to reconcile them with one another. Do not consider GOD as meer power and sovereignty, as meer mercy and goodness, as meer justice and severity; but as all these together, and in such a measure and degree as may make them consistent with one another. The greatest mistakes in religion are certainly sprung from this root, from separating the perfections of GOD, and considering them singly, and framing such wide and large notions of one, as to exclude another: whereas the perfections of GOD agree together, and that is not a divine perfection which contradicts any other perfection. Among men indeed an eminent degree of any one excellency does usually shut out some other; and therefore it is observed, that power and moderation, love and discretion, do not often meet together; that a great memory and a small judgment, a good wit and an ill nature, are many times found in conjunction: but in infinite perfection all perfections do eminently meet and consist together; and it is not necessary that one excellency should be raised upon the ruins of another.

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And if this had been well considered, men would not, by being too intent upon GOD's sovereignty, with neglect of his other perfections, have spoken those hard things about predestination: for the sovereignty of GOD doth by no means set him above the eternal laws of goodness, and truth, and righteousness. And if this were considered, men would not, by poring upon the justice and severity of GOD, be so swallowed up in despair: for GOD is not so severe, but he is merciful to the penitent, and hath left a retreat for the returning sinner. If this were well considered, it would check the presumption of those who encourage themselves in sin, by fancying to themselves a GOD of all mercy and goodness; and *because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore their heart is fully set in them to do do evil:* for it is not goodness and mercy finally to bear with and forgive obstinate offenders, but want of prudence and good government.

Thirdly, Among different opinions concerning GOD (as there always have been and will be in the world) choose those which are fartheſt from extremity; because truth as well as virtue usually lies between the extremes. And here I will instance in that controversy, which has much disquieted the Church almost in all ages, concerning the decrees of GOD; about which there are two extremes, the one, that GOD peremptorily decrees the final condition of every particular person, that is, their everlasting happiness or misery, without any regard or consideration of the good or bad actions of men. The other, that GOD decrees nothing concerning any particular person, but only in general, that men found under such and such qualifications shall be happy or miserable, and puts it into their own power to qualify themselves. Now he that is doubtful in this matter, as every man must

must be that understands the difficulties on both sides, had best take up in the middle opinion, that GOD decrees the final condition of particular persons with respect to certain qualifications, which, speaking absolutely, are not in every man's power; but yet, under the influence of GOD's grace, which is never wanting to the sincere endeavours of men, may be said to be in our power, in the same sense as St Paul says, *I am able to do all things through* CHRIST *strengthening me:* for besides, that this in all probability is the truth, there will be this advantage in it, that he that stands in the middle, is like to be more moderate towards the dissenters on both sides, than either of them will be to one another; because the middle is not so far from either extreme, as the extremes are from one another. At the worst, he stands fairest for an impartial enquiry after truth, and when he has satisfied himself where the truth lies, he may more silently pass over to it, without any great imputation of inconsistency; which cannot but be remarkable in him, who passeth from one extreme to another.

Fourthly, and lastly, entertain no opinion concerning GOD, that doth evidently contradict the practice of religion, and a good life, though never so specious and subtile arguments may be used to persuade it. Truth is most easily seen, and discerned in those reasonings and opinions which tend to practice; because the absurdity and inconvenience of them is soonest discovered: whereas we cannot so certainly find out the truth or falshood of those opinions, which speculative men devise in their studies, without any consideration whether they serve any real purpose of life or not. Men indeed are very apt to form those notions which are most remote from common sense and use; because more pains and wit are required to make them plausible: but there needs no other argument to make a wise man despise them,

them, than that they are unprofitable, and ſignify nothing to our practice, and to make men truly better.

This is univerſally true in all kind of knowledge, but moſt conſiderable in the knowledge of GOD and religion; becauſe that knowledge is of the greateſt conſideration. We need not ſcruple to admit ſome things, not ſo evident to natural reaſon, if we be ſatisfied of the truth of them, from an higher and more cogent reaſon: as that GOD has revealed it, and ſaid it; this general reaſon may perſuade us of a thing that is above and beyond natural reaſon: but we may not admit any thing for a divine revelation, which evidently contradicts and weakens the practice of an holy life; becauſe this is the main end of all divine revelation; and we know GOD, only in order to the ſervice and imitation of him.

Let us then look upon all knowledge that contradicts practice, as vain and falſe, becauſe it deſtroys it's end. There are many things that ſeem probable enough in ſpeculation, which yet we moſt pertinaciouſly deny, becauſe they are not practicable; and there are many things, which ſeem doubtful in ſpeculation, and would admit of great diſpute, which yet becauſe they are found true in practice and experience, are to be taken for certain and unqueſtionable. The ἀργὸς λόγος, the idle reaſoning of the Stoicks, was a thing contemned by the wiſer philoſophers, as vain and uſeleſs ſubtilty. Zeno pretends to demonſtrate there is no motion; and what is the conſequence of this ſpeculation, but that men muſt ſtand ſtill? but ſo long as a man finds he can walk, all the ſophiſtry in the world will not perſuade him, that motion is impoſſible. In like manner, they that would perſuade us, that men can do nothing, nor contribute any more to their own ſanctification, than ſtocks or ſtones, and upon ſcripture-metaphors miſunderſtood, (as our *being dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and created to good*

good works) graft notions, which are impoſſible and abſurd in practice, do not conſider that the natural conſequence of this is, that men muſt do nothing at all in religion, never think of GOD, nor pray to him, nor read his word, nor go to church; but ſit ſtill and be wholly paſſive to the operations of GOD's grace. But however this may ſeem plauſible, and men may think they add much to the glory of GOD's grace, while they deny any power in the creature; yet every conſiderate man will preſently apprehend, that this is by no means to be admitted, becauſe it contradicts practice, and makes all the commands and exhortations of GOD's word vain, and to no purpoſe; becauſe it deſtroys religion, and diſcourages the endeavours of men; makes them ſlothful and careleſs of *working out their own ſalvation*; than which nothing can ſet a man farther from GOD's grace and aſſiſtance, and more immediately diſpoſe him for ruin; and upon ſome ſuch falſe reaſoning as this, the ſlothful ſervant in the parable *hid his talent in a napkin, and buried it in the earth*; but when he was called to account, his excuſe was not admitted, but *he was caſt into utter darkneſs*. The two other particulars, namely, how far we are to imitate the divine perfections, and particularly what thoſe divine qualities are, which our SAVIOUR doth here more eſpecially propound to our imitation, and likewiſe to clear the true meaning of this precept, and to ſhew that the duty here enjoined, *be ye perfect, as your* FATHER *which is in heaven is perfect*, is not impoſſible to us: both theſe I ſhall refer to another opportunity.

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A TABLE OF THE Texts of each SERMON.

SERMON CXI, CXII.

ROM. i. 18, 19. *For the wrath of* GOD *is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs; becauſe that which may be known of* GOD *is manifeſt in them, for* GOD *hath ſhewed it unto them.* page 3, 21.

SERMON CXIII.

JOHN xiii. 17. *If ye know theſe things, happy are ye if ye do them.* p. 39.

A Table of the Texts.

SERMON CXIV.

LUKE xii. 47, 48. *And that ſervant which knew his* LORD'S *will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes: but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten with few ſtripes. For unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will aſk the more.* P. 54.

SERMON CXV, CXVI.

JAMES i. 13, 14. *Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of* GOD; *for* GOD *cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed.* p. 68, 89.

SERMON CXVII.

MATTH. xi. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. *Now when John had heard in priſon the works of* CHRIST, *he ſent two of his diſciples, and ſaid unto him, Art thou he that ſhould come; or do we look for another? JESUS anſwered and ſaid unto them, Go, and ſhew John again theſe things which ye do hear and ſee. The blind receive their ſight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear,*

hear, the dead are raiſed up, and the poor have the goſpel preached unto them. And bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me. p. 106.

SERMON CXVIII, CXIX.

MATTH. xi. 6. *And bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.* p. 128, 149.

SERMON CXX.

ROM. i. 4. *And declared to be the* SON *of* GOD, *with power, according to the* SPIRIT *of holineſs, by the reſurrection from the dead.* p. 166.

SERMON CXXI.

HEB. vi. 4, 5, 6. *For it is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the* HOLY GHOST, *and have taſted the good word of* GOD, *and the powers of the world to come; if they ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: ſeeing they crucify to themſelves the* SON *of* GOD *afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame.* p. 180.

SERMON CXXII, CXXIII.

HEB. v. 9. *And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal ſalvation unto all them that obey him.* p. 203, 222.

SERMON CXXIV.

MATTH. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. *And* JESUS *came and ſpake unto them, ſaying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the* FATHER, *and of the* SON, *and of the* HOLY GHOST: *teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* p. 242.

SERMON CXXV.

LUKE xiii. 24. *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.* p. 263.

SERMON CXXVI, CXXVII.

LUKE xvi. 19, 20. *There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day: and there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of ſores.* p. 287, 309.

SERMON CXXVIII.

LUKE xvi. 31. *If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.* p. 332.

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SERMON CXXIX.

LUKE xvi. 8. *For the children of this world are in their generation wiſer than the children of light.* p. 350.

SERMON CXXX.

MATTH. v. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your* FATHER *which is in heaven is perfect.* p. 371.

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